

You are here: **Advice When Eating and Drinking with Acknowledged Risks** ing

A decision has been made to continue eating and drinking accepting acknowledged risks i.e., aspiration or malnutrition/dehydration. If you are unsure why this decision has been made or have any questions, then please discuss this with your medical team.

What can help when I am eating and drinking accepting risks?

Your Speech and Language Therapist will assess your swallowing and can advise on modified food and/ or drink and/or advice around positioning and strategies, which may make eating and drinking safer and more comfortable.

What can I expect when I eat and drink?

When eating and drinking you may experience any of the following:

- Food or drink collecting in the mouth
- Coughing or choking
- A wet, gurgly voice or noisy breathing
- Shortness of breath after eating and drinking

Advice to help make eating and drinking more comfortable for you:

- It is important to sit upright where possible, and be alert
- Take small mouthfuls to eat and drink, one mouthful at a time.
- Be aware your appetite may be smaller than normal.
- Smaller, more frequent meals/snacks and drinks may be easier.
- Take plenty of time for each mouthful to be swallowed.
- It may be helpful to have assistance to eat and drink.

When to stop and try again later:

If you are:

- **uncomfortable or distressed**
- **drowsy**, unable to stay awake long enough to eat or drink
- **unable to swallow** i.e., holding food/ drink in the mouth.
- The priority is for you to be comfortable.
- You may wish to talk to your doctor if you have any discomfort, your health deteriorates and/or you wish to change your mind about 'eating and drinking with acknowledged risks.'
- Your GP should be the point of contact for further management once you have been discharged from hospital.

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Importance of Good Oral Hygiene

Good oral hygiene is important for comfort, and to ensure that bacteria do not build up in the mouth which can be carried to the lungs and lead to increased risk of chest infections.

- Your mouth and teeth should be cleaned frequently, a minimum of twice daily. Ideally the mouth should also be cleaned before and after you eat, using water or dry mouth gel. You may need assistance from nursing/care staff.
- Dentures should be removed and cleaned with denture cleaner or soap, (not toothpaste). If dentures are very loose it may be best to store them in a pot of clean water, depending on your preference. Avoid leaving dentures in when lying back, or if you are sleeping or drowsy.
- Ensure you sit upright and lean forward to avoid toothpaste falling back into the throat during mouthcare.
- Clean teeth and tongue gently using a small soft toothbrush and a small amount of low foaming fluoride toothpaste.
- You should not rinse the mouth with water, spit or suction any residue out after brushing.
- Consider applying a lip balm if your lips are dry and uncomfortable.

Contact Details

If you are in hospital and you would like to discuss the information in this leaflet further, please speak to your doctor or Speech and Language Therapist. Your GP should be the point of contact for further management once you have been discharged from hospital.