

# Having trouble swallowing?

## Warning signs of a possible swallow impairment

- Trouble chewing, or food left in your mouth or throat after swallowing.
- Coughing or clearing your throat frequently when eating or drinking.
- Hearing a “wet” sound in your voice after eating or drinking.

## Risks of a swallowing impairment

- Food, liquid, or medicine can “go the wrong way” into the lungs (aspiration).
- Aspiration can carry harmful bacteria from the mouth into the lungs, which can cause aspiration pneumonia.
- Trouble eating or drinking can lead to choking, malnutrition, or dehydration.

## If there is a problem, a speech-language pathologist can help by

- Teaching you exercises to improve your swallowing ability.
- Training you how to eat and drink in a safer and more comfortable way.
- Telling you how to make foods and liquids easier to swallow.

## Tips that people may find helpful\*

- Sit all the way up when you eat or drink.
- Don't talk with food in your mouth.
- Take small bites and chew well.
- Take small sips often to wash food down.
- Choose softer foods.
- Avoid dry, hard, crunchy, or chewy foods.
- If you can take pills with food, try placing them in applesauce, yogurt, or pudding.
- Stay upright for at least 30 minutes to allow food to move along the digestive tract.
- Brush your teeth at least every morning and night to reduce harmful bacteria.

\* **This is not medical or treatment advice.** If you have any concerns about your swallowing, seek medical guidance from your physician or speech-language pathologist.