

Tips for Managing Difficulty Swallowing



Things you can do on your own

- Ask your care team about working with a speech pathologist, who can show you ways to avoid choking.
- Avoid gagging or choking by eating soft foods like yogurt or Jell-O or drinking liquid meal replacements.
- Take small bites and chew your food well before swallowing.
- Use a straw when drinking.
- Eat small meals and snacks throughout the day.
- Drink 6-8 cups of fluids per day, preferably water.
- Sit upright when eating or drinking, and stay that way for at least an hour after you eat.
- Eat in a calm atmosphere, with no distractions. Do not talk while eating.
- Avoid fizzy drinks. They may make you feel full.
- If food does stick, don't panic. Try to relax, drink fluids, and let it pass on its own.



With the help of your care team

Ask your care team about prescription medications or treatments to help.

- If you have an illness causing your mouth to swell, your care team may prescribe you antibiotics.
- Your care team may suggest using a tube to help you eat and drink.



When to call your care team for help

- If you are unable to eat or drink without choking or gagging
- If you have pain with swallowing
- If you have a feeling that what you swallow gets “stuck”
- If you have nausea, vomiting, mouth sores, or a white coating on your tongue
- If you have signs of fluid loss, including:
 - Feeling weak, dizzy, or like you will pass out
 - Having dark yellow or very little urine
 - Having a dry mouth or being thirsty
- If you have a fast heartbeat



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/difficulty-swallowing or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.