

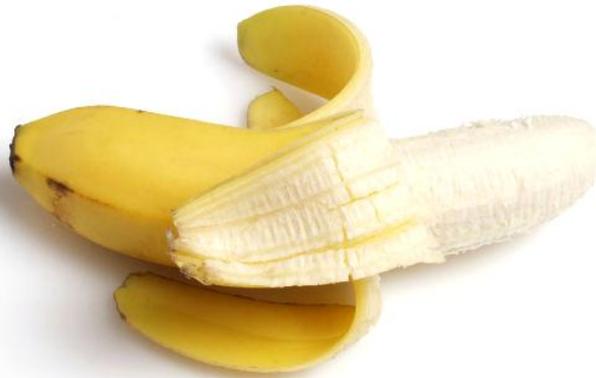


Swallowing Disorders & Nutrition

Dysphagia is a term used to describe an increased difficulty in swallowing. Sometimes swallowing difficulties can occur when food is eaten too fast, or is not chewed enough. However, when there is an ongoing issue requiring more time and effort to swallow food, there may be a diagnosis of dysphagia.

Swallowing difficulties most often occur when the nerves or muscles that control swallowing are damaged. This can happen in:

- Head and neck cancer
- Head and neck injuries
- Infections
- Dementia
- Stroke
- Head trauma
- Changes in mental status
- Brain disorders (e.g., Parkinson's Disease)



An increase in swallowing problems may contribute to:

- A decrease in the total amount of food eaten, leading to poor nutrition
- Increased time needed to eat a meal
- Food or liquid entering the trachea (known as aspiration)

The texture of food can be altered to make it easier to chew and/or swallow for someone who is experiencing difficulties or dysphagia. Working with a Speech Therapist can help determine which texture is most appropriate. A dietitian can give guidance to help make foods with altered textures enjoyable.

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Two common types of modified textures that are recommended for those experiencing swallowing difficulties include pureed and mechanical soft foods.

Pureed foods are easy to swallow because they are blended, whipped, or mashed until they take on a “pudding-like” texture.

- Avoid foods that are dry, chunky, sticky, or coarse.
- Try sweet rolls, breads, well-cooked pasta, or rice that has been pureed to a pudding consistency.
- Try a well-mashed fresh banana or applesauce with milk added, sprinkled with lump-free brown sugar.

Mechanical Soft foods are blended, chopped, ground, or mashed so they are easy to chew and swallow.

- Avoid overly sticky foods or chewy candies. Avoid large chunks of food that are coarse.
- Try soft, moist casseroles and fish, meat, or egg salads without large chunks of meat or vegetables.
- Cover bread slices or pancakes with sauce or syrup, and then mix the two items until the bread product begins to make a slurry.
- Vegetables should be well cooked and easily mashed with a fork.
- Include soft drained canned or cooked fruits without seeds or skin.

Check with a dietitian or doctor for your specific dietary needs.

Additional Notes:

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