

## **When Swallowing is Difficult or Painful – Tips for Managing Dysphagia**

The aim is to allow someone to eat and drink safely. Please consult a Speech Language Therapist and Dietitian for more specific and personalised advice.

The following tips may be helpful:

### ***Posture, Positioning & Environment***

- Sitting straight, shoulders level
- Comfortable with head positioned so there is a straight line between mouth and stomach
- Relaxed and peaceful environment – so person can concentrate on eating not what else is happening in the room
- Time for saliva to start flowing and brain to register that food is about to be swallowed
- Make use of morning for more food intake when person is often more relaxed, less tired and finds eating easier
- Make sure person can reach food and drink easily
- Make sure person eats 2-3 hours before going to bed to prevent reflux
- Suitable utensils – plates and bowls, cutlery and devices to promote self-feeding

### ***Texture Modification***

Important considerations

- Variety from breads and cereals, fruit and vegetables, milk and milk products or alternatives, lean meat, fish, chicken, legumes, nuts and seeds.
- Appearance of food on plate
- Temperature of food
- Size of cut up food or mouthfuls
- Fluids – appropriate thickness assessed by speech language therapists

### ***If people can't feed themselves***

- Sit in front of them rather than off to side
- Let person see and smell food before starting
- Experiment with different amounts of food to find right amount
- Place food in middle of mouth – front third of tongue
- Remind to close lips when swallowing
- Check mouthful is swallowed before starting next – can gently stroke the throat downwards to help swallow occur
- Keep person upright for at least 20 minutes after feeding