

Learning Disability Dysphagia Diamond Standards: Families, Carers and Social Care Child

What is dysphagia?

- Dysphagia is the word used to describe difficulties when eating, drinking or swallowing.
- Dysphagia can be very serious and cause chest infections and pneumonia, weight loss, malnutrition and dehydration.
- Dysphagia should not be ignored.



Child family and carer pathway: How to identify dysphagia and seek support

Notice if choking, recurrent chest infections (more than 2 courses of antibiotics in 12 month period), wet and or gurgling voice after drinking and other symptoms eg. weight loss (triangulate with the other pathways re symptoms).

Symptoms: during and/or immediately after food and drink

- Vomiting/regurgitation of feeds
- Poor weight gain
- Crying, inconsolable
- Refusing of feeds
- Wet voice quality
- Wet breath sounds
- Spluttering
- Blood in poos or vomit
- Poor chewing
- Chesty wheezy unexplained cough
- Water brash (water taste in the back of throat)
- Sore tummy
- Recurrent chest infection
- Increase in behaviours which challenge around mealtimes
- Possible choking incident
- New swallowing difficulty
- Dehydration
- Nutritional compromise
- Loss of food from mouth, taking a long time to eat a meal
- Coughing when or immediately after eating or drinking

Review with primary care/learning disability team/
other doctor eg. paediatrician if involved.

If you notice any one of these symptoms
this could indicate dysphagia and please seek support
and advice from your GP/learning disability team/speech and language
therapist (SALT)/other doctor eg. paediatrician if involved.

Please complete the screening questions to gather more information
and take with you to your appointment, about whether the person
may have dysphagia' at the end of the pathway

Paediatric Dysphagia Screening Questions

Filling out the questions below gives more information about person you care for and about their swallow. This information helps health professionals decide who to refer the person to, helping the person you care for to get the right treatment as quickly as possible.

Question	Record answers
Are there any concerns about the child or young person's eating, drinking and swallowing?	
Is the child or young person displaying any of the following signs of swallow difficulty?	<input type="checkbox"/> Frequent and persisting gagging? <input type="checkbox"/> Coughing when eating and/or drinking? <input type="checkbox"/> Choking when eating and/or drinking? <input type="checkbox"/> Eye watering when eating and/or drinking? <input type="checkbox"/> Developing wet sounding breathing or voice when eating and/or drinking?
How frequently are the above signs occurring when eating and/or drinking?	
Are there concerns that difficulty swallowing are negatively impacting on the child or young person's quality of life, e.g. restricting or refusing food and drink?	

Paediatric Dysphagia Screening Questions

Question	Record your answers
Are there concerns that difficulty swallowing is negatively impacting on the child or young person's level of hydration?	
Does the child or young person have a history of recurrent lower respiratory tract infections/chest infections?	
Has the child or young person's swallow been assessed previously and if so, what recommendations were made and are these recommendations being followed?	

If the responses to these questions causes concern, then please refer the child or young person to their local Speech and Language Therapy Service for a swallow assessment. Please include this information in the referral to support effective triage and assessment planning.