

Swallowing Disorders (Dysphagia)

What are swallowing disorders?

Having a hard time swallowing, also known as dysphagia, can happen with some neurological conditions including:

- Stroke
- Traumatic brain injury (TBI)
- Cerebral Palsy
- Parkinson's disease
- Multiple sclerosis
- Progressive supranuclear palsy
- Huntington's disease
- Myasthenia gravis

There are two main symptoms of swallowing disorders. Some people are not able to swallow any food or drinks. Others may cough or choke on things they swallow when it goes down the wrong part of their throat. When someone chokes on their food or drink it puts them at risk for aspiration. Aspiration is when food or drinks go down the windpipe into the lungs. This can be very dangerous and lead to pneumonia, an illness that affects the lungs.

People who have difficulty swallowing may have food that gets “stuck” when they swallow and may start drooling. They drool because they have a hard time swallowing the saliva in their mouth.

Treatment includes adding thickeners to food and drinks or changing how the individual eats or chews. Medication may make it easier for some people to swallow. For more severe cases, people may need surgery or a feeding tube.

How can I or a loved one help improve care for people with swallowing disorders?

Consider participating in a clinical trial so clinicians and scientists can learn more about swallowing disorders. Clinical research uses human volunteers to help researchers learn more about a disorder and perhaps find better ways to safely detect, treat, or prevent disease.

All types of volunteers are needed—those who are healthy or may have an illness or disease—of all different ages, sexes, races, and ethnicities to ensure that study results apply to as many people as possible, and that treatments will be safe and effective for everyone who will use them.

For information about participating in clinical research visit [NIH Clinical Research Trials and You](#). Learn about clinical trials currently looking for people with swallowing disorders at [Clinicaltrials.gov](#).

Clinical Trials

Clinical trials are studies that allow us to learn more about disorders and improve care. They can help connect patients with new and upcoming treatment options.

Search Clinical Trials

Where can I find more information about swallowing disorders?

Information may be available from the following resources:

- [American Speech-Language-Hearing Association \(ASHA\)](#) Phone: 301-296-8700 or 800-638-8255; 301-296-5650 TTY
- [MedlinePlus](#)

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