



Dysphagia:

A Parent's Guide



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For permissions requests, please contact

Rebecca Garnsey @ rebecca.garnsey@inspireaheg.com.au

Inspire Allied Health and Education Group PTY LTD

PO Box 275,

Camden NSW 2570

Australia

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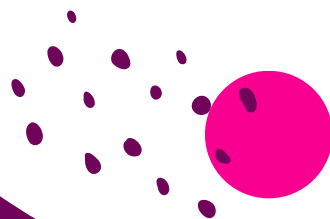
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What is Dysphagia?

Dysphagia is a medical term used to describe difficulties in swallowing. It can affect a child's ability to safely and effectively swallow food, liquids, or saliva. Dysphagia can be caused by various underlying conditions, making it important to understand the specific type and characteristics of your child's dysphagia.



Types of Dysphagia:

Oropharyngeal Dysphagia: This type is related to problems in the mouth and throat, often resulting from neurological issues or structural abnormalities.

Oesophageal Dysphagia: This type is associated with difficulties in the oesophagus, usually due to physical obstructions or motility problems.

Diagnosing Dysphagia:

Dysphagia is typically diagnosed by healthcare professionals, such as Speech Pathologists, Gastroenterologists, or Otolaryngologists. Other professionals such as Dieticians can also be involved in assessment and treatment. Diagnostic methods may include:

- Clinical evaluation
- Video fluoroscopic swallow study (VFSS)
- Fibreoptic endoscopic evaluation of swallowing (FEES)
- Oesophageal motility testing



Checklist for Parents: Characteristics of Dysphagia

If you suspect your child has dysphagia, consider the following checklist for common characteristics of dysphagia:

- ✓ Choking, coughing, or gagging during meals
- ✓ Difficulty initiating a swallow
- ✓ Prolonged feeding times
- ✓ Refusing to eat or drink
- ✓ Recurrent respiratory infections



Steps to Take If You Suspect Dysphagia:

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- Document your child's symptoms and behaviours during meals
 - Seek advice from your child's paediatrician or a specialist
 - Keep a food diary to track any problematic foods or consistencies
 - Attend appointments and follow the recommended assessments
 - Develop a support network with other parents and professionals



Steps to Support a Child with Dysphagia:

1. Follow Medical Recommendations: Adhere to the recommendations of healthcare professionals regarding diet modifications, thickened liquids, and any necessary therapies.

2. Create a Safe Eating Environment: Minimise distractions, and ensure your child is sitting upright during meals.

3. Feeding Schedule: Develop a consistent feeding schedule to establish routines and expectations.

Strategies for Children with Dysphagia:

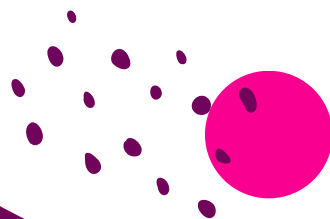
A range of strategies can be adopted to support children with dysphagia. We recommend that these strategies are only used following consultation with a medical or allied health provider. At Inspire our Speech Pathologists and Occupational Therapists work with children who have been diagnosed with Dysphagia.

- Texture modifications.
- Consistency adjustments.
- Small, frequent meals.
- Slow, small bites.
- Swallowing exercises.
- Specialised feeding products (e.g., modified utensils or cups).
- Parental modelling.
- Oral motor exercises.

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- Pacing techniques.
 - Modify utensils.
 - Monitor liquid intake.
 - Supportive seating.
 - Mealtime socialisation.
 - Patience and encouragement.
 - Monitor weight and growth.



Dysphagia can be a challenging condition to manage, but with the right information, support, and healthcare professionals, you can help your child overcome its challenges. By understanding the types, characteristics, diagnosis, and support available, you can provide the best care and create a positive, nurturing environment for your child. Please reach out to us at Inspire Allied Health and Education Group to find out how we can support your child and family.





Contact

Phone Number: (02) 4666 4255 / (02) 4648 0837

Email: hr@inspireaheg.com.au

Website: www.inspireaheg.com.au

 www.inspireaheg.com.au

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