

# Swallowing Problems

Having a hard time swallowing is called dysphagia. It can affect eating, drinking, and taking medicine. Swallowing problems may lead to poor nutrition.

## Signs of Swallowing Problems

- Coughing, choking or a gurgling voice while eating and drinking
- Feeling food stuck in your throat or mouth
- Drooling
- Having a weak cough or weak voice
- Having trouble or pain with swallowing
- Avoiding some or all food or liquids

## Swallowing problems can be caused by:

- A stroke
- Head and neck cancer
- Injuries to the throat
- A head injury
- Brain disorders
- Radiation
- Some medicines
- A tracheostomy

## Your Care

If your doctor suspects a swallowing problem, a Speech Language Pathologist, called a SLP, may need to check your swallowing. The SLP is trained to help patients with swallowing problems. Swallowing problems are checked two ways:

- **Swallowing check:** The SLP watches you eat food and drink liquids that are thick and thin. If swallowing problems are seen, more testing may be needed.
- **Modified barium swallow:** This test is done to check how you swallow. X-ray pictures are taken as foods and liquids move from your mouth through your throat.

Based on the results of the tests, your care may include:

- Having certain types of food or liquid thickness
- Holding your head in a certain way while you eat and drink
- Doing exercises to make your swallowing easier and safer

**Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.**