



A fact sheet for aged care residents

Nutrition and texture modified food and drinks: eating and drinking when you have problems with swallowing

This fact sheet outlines changes that can be made to the texture of your food and drink to support you to eat and drink more safely and comfortably.



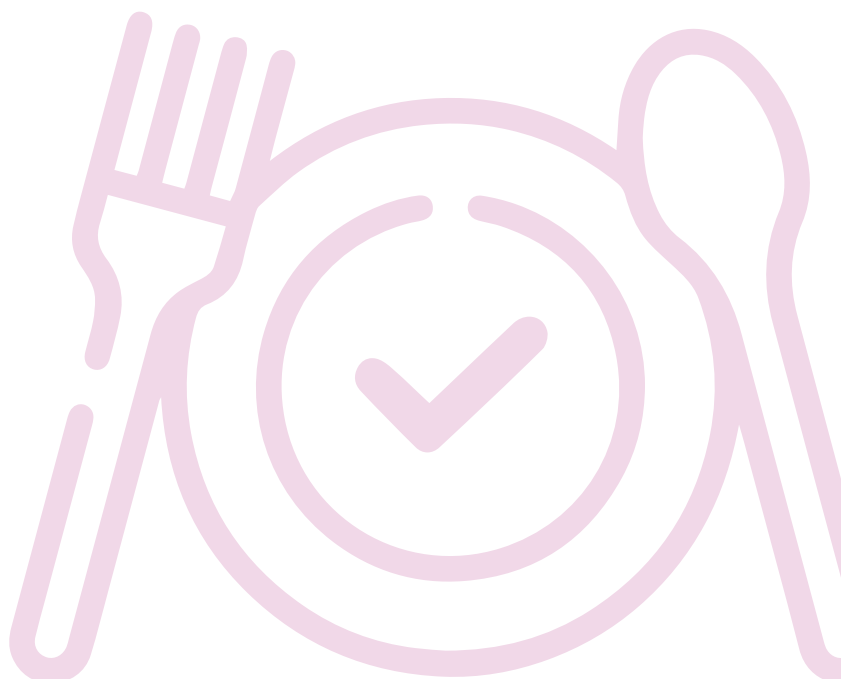
Why this matters

Swallowing problems, known as dysphagia, can cause food or drink to 'go down the wrong way' and enter the airway or lungs instead of the stomach. This can cause coughing, choking and pneumonia.

Texture of foods and thickness of drinks can be adjusted to make them easier and safer to swallow.

If the texture of the food and thickness of your drink needs modifying, your aged care provider will make sure everything still looks, tastes and smells appealing.

This includes when you can only swallow small amounts or if you receive some of your nutrition via a tube.





How it's done



Speech pathologist and dietitian

Your aged care provider can engage a speech pathologist and dietitian to help with changes to your food and drink texture.

A speech pathologist can help work out which food and drink texture may suit you.

A dietitian can ensure that any changes to texture and thickness can still be tasty and meet your nutrition and hydration needs.



The final decision on food texture and drink thickening is yours

You will be provided with food texture and drink thickness options that are acceptable to you.

You can weigh the risks of choking, or of food entering your airway with your own preference about the texture of your food and drinks. You can make that choice and live the best life possible.



Don't risk malnutrition and dehydration

Changing the texture of food and drink can change the way it looks and your experience consuming them. You may not feel like eating or drinking as much as you used to.

A dietitian can help to ensure that your food and drink still provides the flavour and nutrition you need.



Appealing food and drink, no matter the texture

Foods and drinks requiring texture modification should still be appealing to you. Your aged care provider can:

- ✓ use food moulds to shape puree foods so they look similar to the original size and shape
- ✓ pipe different foods into varied shapes and patterns
- ✓ use ramekins to hold minced meats and gravy or sauce, with soft vegetables arranged on the plate
- ✓ layer pureed fruit, custard and similar food in a clear container somewhat like trifle
- ✓ layer minced meat, vegetables and sauce, somewhat like lasagne or moussaka
- ✓ ensure the use of sharp knives to cut up foods where needed to avoid a 'mashed' look
- ✓ explain what each mouthful actually is (not all green puree tastes the same)
- ✓ many people do not like thickened water with no flavour.

Your aged care provider should not:

- ✗ mix all foods into one big mush on the plate.

Some regular menu items may still be suitable for everyone – for example mousse, custards and pâté. These can be offered to you even if you require modifications in the texture of other parts of your meal.



Smaller meals and more often

Eating smaller meals and eating more frequently may be helpful if you have trouble swallowing.

This can include food being cut into bite-sized pieces, minced or pureed and drinks being thickened.



Upright and alert

Being alert and in an upright position will help you to swallow more safely.

If you are concerned about your level of alertness or ability to stay in an upright position, you can organise a meeting with your aged care and medical team.

Your concerns should be addressed respectfully and promptly.



Remember that swallowing risks and symptoms can change over time.

They may improve if you recover from an illness or stroke.

They may worsen if frailty and brain function get worse.

Texture modifications may need to change over time too and you may be able to resume food with usual textures if you improve.

If you think there have been changes to your swallowing, you can request a change in texture and/or a re-assessment by the speech pathologist.

There is evidence that physical activity can reduce symptoms and risks of dysphagia.

Your aged care provider must be able to demonstrate that:

- there are systems in place to serve texture modified food that looks, tastes and smells great and is served at an appropriate temperature. This is regardless of the distance from the kitchen, texture of the meal and other organisational challenges
- staff preparing meals are trained to prepare food to an appropriate consistency in line with the International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI) Framework at <https://iddsi.org/Framework>, and as advised by the speech pathologist
- staff preparing meals are trained to serve all your food, drinks and snacks in an appealing way and that meet your nutritional needs as advised by the dietitian
- all staff are trained to help you stay well nourished and hydrated, and enjoy your food and drink
- they should provide an inviting dining environment and experience.





How you can have input

You can have input into any decision about the menu, meals, drinks and snacks you receive in aged care.

There should be regular meetings between you, meal and care staff, and a dietitian and speech pathologist, regarding the nutrition, quality and presentation of your food, drink and dining experience.

Remember, the final decision on food texture and thickening of drinks is yours.



No planning about you, without you.



Standard 1: Consumer dignity and choice

The consumer-focused **Aged Care Quality Standards** mean that you are supported to exercise choice in the care you receive and the way that it is delivered (Standard 1(3)).

Meal and care staff, speech pathologists and dietitians will communicate their recommendations and reasons in a way that allows you to make an informed decision.

Where to go for help

If you have any concerns about your menu, nutrition and meal experience:

1. talk to your aged care provider in the first instance
2. speak with an aged care advocate at the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) on **1800 700 600** or visit opan.com.au, for support to raise your concerns, and/or
3. phone the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission's Food, Nutrition and Dining Hotline on **1800 844 044** (free call), 9am – 5pm AEDT, Monday to Friday if you wish to speak with professionals about issues, ideas or concerns in relation to an enjoyable food, nutrition and dining experience in an aged care service. Alternatively, you can contact the Commission's general enquiries line on **1800 951 822** (free call).

Further resources

Swallowing

Additional fact sheets on swallowing are available at www.agedcarequality.gov.au/consumers/food-dining-and-nutrition:

- Supporting safe and enjoyable mealtime for people with swallowing difficulties fact sheet
- Informed choice and supported decision making for people who eat and/or drink when there may be a risk.



Phone

1800 951 822



Web

agedcarequality.gov.au



Write

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission
GPO Box 9819, in your capital city