



LEIGH HARTER  
SPEECH SERVICES

# Understanding Dysphagia

## Signs and symptoms

- Coughing/choking
- Runny nose
- Watery eyes
- Excessive drooling
- Frequent throat clearing
- Wet vocal quality
- Dehydration and/or excessive weight loss
- Recurrent respiratory illness/pneumonia
- Aspiration/penetration
- Multiple swallow pattern
- Changes in taste
- Increased time to consume meal

## Causes and groups at risk

- Stroke/CVA
- Parkinson's disease
- Alzheimer's disease
- Multiple sclerosis
- Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis
- Progressive supranuclear palsy
- Huntington's disease
- Dementia
- Elderly population
- Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD)
- Laryngeal clefts
- Head & Neck Oncology

## Treatment with a speech language pathologist

- Compensatory strategies
- Oral-motor exercises to increase control over lip, tongue, soft palate, and vocal fold function
- Swallow maneuvers (Shaker, supraglottic swallow, effortful swallow, etc.)
- Modification of posture/positioning (chin down, head turn, head tilt)
- Diet recommendations

## What is dysphagia?

**Difficulty swallowing saliva, liquids, foods and medications of various consistencies.**

## Diagnosis and tests

- Bedside Swallow Evaluation (BSE): typically the first step in evaluating swallowing skills to determine if more in-depth testing is warranted. During the BSE, various textures and consistencies of solids and liquids are administered via spoon, cup, and straw to evaluate how well the patient uses his/her tongue and lips to swallow.
- Fiberoptic Endoscopic Evaluation (FEES): requires an endoscope to be passed into the patient's nose and then down into the throat until it sits just above the larynx. The light and camera attached to the end of the endoscope allows the SLP to observe what is happening before and after the swallow.
- Modified Barium Swallow Study (MBSS): A videofluoroscopic evaluation where various consistencies, textures, and positions are trialed to evaluate swallow efficiency before, during, and after the swallow. This is completed in a radiological suite with SLP and radiologist present.
- Reflux Symptom Index (RSI): self-assessment questionnaire that quantifies a patient's reflux symptoms