



PATIENT INFORMATION

What Causes Dysphagia?

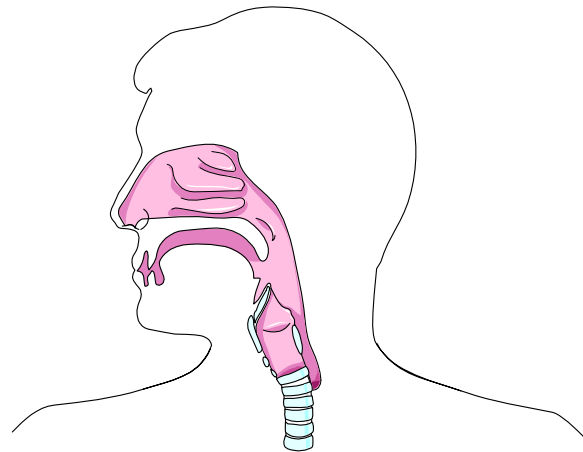
Dysphagia (i.e. swallowing disorder) has many causes. Conditions that weaken or damage the muscles, nerves and/or physical structures used for swallowing may cause dysphagia. These include conditions such as:

- stroke,
- brain injury,
- Multiple Sclerosis,
- other neurological disorders,
- cancer of the head, neck, or esophagus.

What Are Some Problems Caused by Dysphagia?

Someone who has swallowing problems may not be able to eat and drink enough to stay healthy.

Sometimes a person with dysphagia may have food or liquids “go down the wrong way” into the trachea (windpipe) instead of into the stomach. The person may not be able to cough or clear the throat in order to remove it. Food or liquid that enters the lungs may cause a serious infection (aspiration pneumonia). For individuals who are already weak, this type of infection can be life threatening.



What Are Symptoms of Dysphagia?

Persons who have dysphagia may not experience any pain. Common symptoms of dysphagia are:

- Coughing
- Changes in quality of the voice
- Watering eyes while eating

Any one who has symptoms of dysphagia should be examined. The individual’s physician and speech-language pathologist will work together to assess the cause of the problem and develop an effective treatment plan.

Information is based on Fact Sheet in Dysphasia (reviewed 10-01-1998) by National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, National Institute of Health.

Disclaimer: This information is for health educational purposes only. If you have questions, you should ask your doctor, nurse, or other persons who you see for your health care needs. Each clinician caring for the patient is responsible to determine the most appropriate care.

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