Make Feeding Safer

Over 50% of the residents in your home have swallowing or feeding problems. People with stroke are at increased risk of swallowing problems.

Those with swallowing problems are at risk of:
- Pneumonia
- Malnutrition
- Dehydration
- Weight loss
- Social isolation

What to listen for:
- Wet, gurgly or phlegmy sounding voice
- Throat clearing
- Coughing or choking
- Resident complaining of:
  - A ‘lump in my throat’
  - Throat ‘feels tight’
  - Something ‘sticking in my throat’
  - Heartburn

What to look for:
- Pocketing food or medication in mouth or cheek
- Spitting out food
- Drooling
- Problems chewing
- Repetitive swallowing
- Shortness of breath after meals
- Taking longer to eat
- Losing interest in food or leaving food on plate
- Feeling anxious about meal times

If you notice a change in a resident’s eating or swallowing, it should be reported to the team.

For more posters and resources on stroke best practices, please contact:
Gwen Brown, Regional Community & LTC Coordinator, Stroke Network of Southeastern Ontario
(613) 549-6666 x 6867 email: gwen.brown@kingstonhsc.ca

Keys to Successful Feeding

YIELD

- Oral care before and after eating
- Minimize distractions
- Make sure resident is sitting up at 60° to 90° angle and that the resident’s head is not tipped back
- Position yourself at eye level
- Get resident up in chair to eat whenever possible
- Use assistive devices when required
- One type of food at a time

- Cue to look at whole plate if food is being missed
- Give one level teaspoonful of food or fluid at a time
- Check for complete swallowing after each spoonful
- Remind resident to keep swallowing, cough to clear throat and use tongue to clear food
- Check if food is left in mouth

Encourage residents to accept the food textures. Be positive. What you say does make a difference.

Special diet textures include:
- Pureed and minced foods
- Popsicles, ice cream, liquid supplements and milkshakes are not considered thickened fluids

Oral Care

A clean mouth and teeth are essential to comfort and good health. Gum disease, bacteria and particles in the mouth can lead to stroke, heart disease, pneumonia, and infections.

DO NOT USE...
- Oral swabs because they do not clean the mouth properly
- Alcohol-based mouthwashes as they dry and irritate the mouth
- Toothpaste or mouthwash if resident is at risk of aspiration

DO...
- Provide oral care before and after meals, each morning and at bedtime
- Provide assistance with brushing mouth, teeth and dentures
- Check for pocketing of food and medications
- Use a soft toothbrush

If you notice a change in a resident’s eating or swallowing, it should be reported to the team.

For more information go to: Heart & Stroke Foundation of Canada (2015) Taking Action for Optimal Community and Long Term Stroke Care (TACLTS) LTD.

STROKE NETWORK of Southeastern Ontario

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