

Red Flags

- Unexplained decrease in appetite
- Weight loss, dehydration, malnutrition
- Drooling or food falling from the mouth
- Holding food in the mouth
- Difficulty chewing/food remaining in the mouth
- Complaints of discomfort/pain with swallowing
- Difficulty breathing with swallowing
- "Wet" voice
- Recurring pneumonia/chest congestion

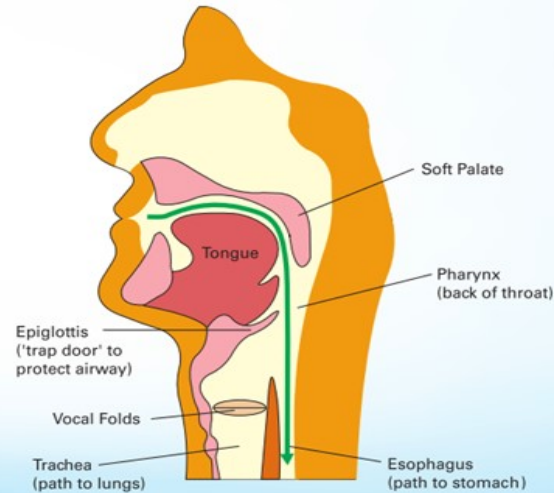
Aspiration Indicators May Include

- Coughing or choking while eating/drinking *
- Frequent throat clearing while eating/drinking *
- Voice changes while eating/drinking *
(e.g., sounding "wet" or "gurgly")
- Recurrent pneumonia
- Changes in temperature and respiration rate

* May not be observed with silent aspiration

Illustrations for Patient Education

Correct Path for Food/Drink



Incorrect Path for Food/Drink

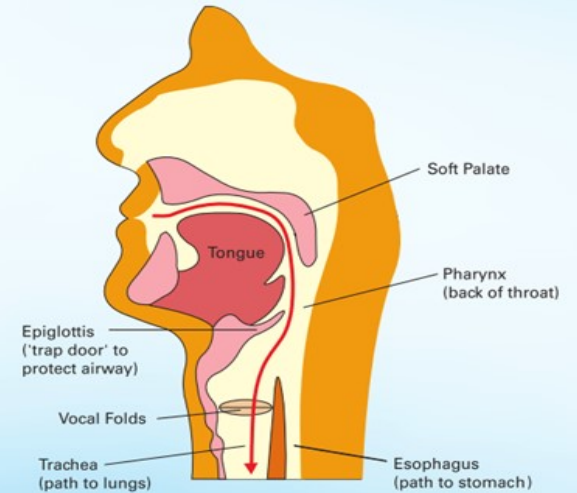


Illustration Adapted by
Nova Scotia Hearing and Speech Centres 2009

Safe Eating Recommendations

- Sit upright for all meals and while taking medications
- Be alert while eating
- Eliminate distractions during meals
- Eat slowly
- Self feed if possible
- Take small bites (1 tsp) and sips
- Avoid straws
- Medications (crushed or whole) may need to be taken with something other than water (e.g. applesauce, pudding)
- Clean mouth and teeth after all meals
- Remain upright for at least 20-30 minutes after meals

Management

Refer to Speech-Language Pathology for assessment and management. Speech-Language Pathology services are available across the Eastern Health continuum.

*Developed by the Eastern Health
Speech-Language Pathology Council Pamphlets Subgroup*

Adapted from the Nova Scotia Hearing and Speech Centres

Where Can I Get More Information for My Patients?

For more information please contact the Professional Practice Consultant for Speech-Language Pathology at (709) 777-8109 or via email at judy.davidson@easternhealth.ca



*Healthy People, Healthy
Communities*

Physician Pocket Guide: A Dysphagia Education Tool

