Speech Therapy for Swallowing Disorders.

What are swallowing disorders?
Swallowing disorders, also called dysphagia (dis-FAY-juh), can occur at different stages of the swallowing process.

What are some signs or symptoms of swallowing disorders?
Several diseases, conditions, or surgical interventions can result in swallowing problems.
General signs may include:

- Coughing during eating or drinking
- Wet or gurgly sounding voice during or after eating or drinking
- Extra effort or time needed to chew or swallow
- Food or liquid leaking from the mouth or getting stuck in the mouth
- Recurring pneumonia or chest congestion after eating
- Weight loss or dehydration from not being able to eat enough

As a result, adults may have:

- Poor nutrition or dehydration
- Risk of aspiration (food or liquid entering the airway), which can lead to pneumonia and chronic lung disease
- Less enjoyment of eating or drinking
- Embarrassment or isolation in social situations involving eating

How are swallowing disorders diagnosed?
Talk to your doctor about your symptoms to determine if speech therapy may be appropriate for you.

Speech therapy can help with swallowing disorders…
A speech-language pathologist (SLP) will evaluate individuals who are experiencing problems eating and drinking.
The SLP will:

- Take a careful history of medical conditions and symptoms
- Look at the strength and movement of the muscles involved in swallowing
- Observe feeding to see posture, behavior, and movement during eating and drinking
- Develop a customized treatment plan to address your specific needs
What treatments are available for people with swallowing disorders?

Treatment depends on the cause, symptoms, and type of swallowing problem. A speech-language pathologist may recommend:
- Specific swallowing treatment (e.g., exercises to improve muscle movement)
- Safe swallow strategies
- Modified diet and/or food and liquid textures

What causes swallowing disorders in adults?
- Stroke
- Head and neck cancers
- Heart surgery or other chest surgery
- Trauma to the throat or larynx
- Degenerative neurological disorders: dementia, Alzheimer’s disease, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson’s disease, or Lou Gehrig’s disease
- Age-related changes

How do I get started?
Discuss your swallowing symptoms and difficulties with your doctor. A physician referral is required for speech therapy services.

Please contact us with further questions or to schedule an appointment.

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For more information, please call 765.751.2555