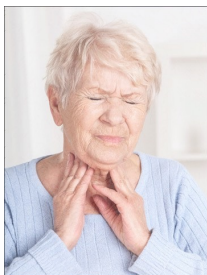




‘Young at heart, slightly older in other places’ – eating and drinking problems and ageing.

Swallowing difficulties (Dysphagia) are a common consequence of many health conditions, and head and neck surgeries, however swallowing difficulties can also be associated with ageing. Estimates suggest up to 20% of all adults over 50 may be affected.



Changes might include such things as reduction in muscle strength for chewing, taste and smell, dental issues, dry mouth or throat, or recurrent illness such as pneumonia.

These changes may result in poor nutrition/hydration, unintended weight loss, avoidance of eating in public, loss of enjoyment in previously enjoyed food, and/or a risk of food/fluid entering the lungs (aspiration) leading to pneumonia and chronic lung disease.

What might you notice?

- Difficulty or reluctance swallowing food or fluid
- Regularly coughing during or after eating or drinking
- Regularly choking on food, fluid or medication
- Gurgly voice after eating and/or drinking
- Recurrent chest infections or pneumonia
- Taking longer than 20-30 mins to eat a meal



Suggestions to help:

- Eat when you are comfortable and relaxed.
- Reduce distractions and keep conversation to between mouthfuls
- Have smaller meals or snacks more frequently throughout the day instead of 3 larger meals
- Chop or grate harder textured foods, and/or add sauces and gravies
- Ensure dentures fit well. Use of a denture paste may assist

Who can you talk to?

- **General Practitioner:** For medical assessment and advice.
- **Pharmacist:** About difficulties swallowing medications
- **Dentist:** To check dentures for fit and function.
- **Dietitian:** Advice to improve and maintain nutrition and hydration
- **Speech Language Therapist:** For assessment and treatment of swallowing difficulties

For further information or advice please contact Therapy Professionals Ltd

Phone (03) 3775280,
Email: admin@tpl.nz
Website: <http://www.therapyprofessionals.co.nz>

Our Dietitian or Speech Language Therapist will be happy to help.