

Patient information

Feeding at Risk - A Guide for Patients, Families and Carers

Speech and Language Therapy

You have been given this leaflet as you or your relative has made the decision to 'feed at risk' – that is eating and drinking with the risk of aspiration (food and drink entering the lungs).

There are a number of reasons why somebody may decide to feed at risk:

- the overall experience and pleasure gained from food and drink outweighs the risk
- tube feeding is not indicated or possible
- there is unlikely to be any improvement in the person's overall medical condition or swallowing function.

What can help when I am eating and drinking with risk?

The Speech and Language Therapist can advise on particular consistencies of food and drinks, which might be more comfortable or easier to take. The Speech and Language Therapist will talk to you/your family/carers to understand more about your likes and dislikes to ensure these are taken in to consideration. You might hear the recommendations referred to as 'least distressing consistencies'.

When eating and drinking you can also:

- make sure your mouth and teeth are thoroughly cleaned before and after food and drink
- sit as upright as possible during and for at least 30 minutes after food and drink
- take small mouthfuls slowly
- wait for each mouthful to be swallowed and cleared from your mouth/throat before having another one.

When eating and drinking you may experience any of the following:

- food or drink collecting in the mouth
- coughing or choking
- wet gurgly voice or noisy breathing
- shortness of breath.

If this is distressing, then you may wish to stop temporarily and try again after a short while/later.

It is important to remember that the priority is for you to be comfortable and to enjoy eating and drinking as best as you are able.

You may wish to talk to your medical team or family doctor (GP) if your health deteriorates and/or you change your mind about feeding at risk. It is important to make plans about treatment if your health should deteriorate as a result of risk feeding. For example, discuss how a potential chest infection or pneumonia would be treated and whether this would take place at home or in hospital.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your Outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further Information:

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All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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