










Co-Creating Safe and Enjoyable Meals for People with Swallowing Difficulty



**Making a Referral for a Person With Swallowing Difficulty:
Extract from Additional Resources**

Making a Referral for a Person With Swallowing Difficulty

Health professional	Role in swallowing and mealtime management	Indicators for a referral
Speech pathologist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the person's swallowing • Determine if the person is having swallowing difficulties • Determine the nature of the swallowing difficulties • Determine the types of modifications that may be required to foods/fluids, positioning and mealtime assistance needs • Create a plan for safe food, fluid and medication intake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coughing when eating/drinking • Wet/gurgly voice after eating/drinking • Difficulty managing foods/liquids that were previously managed well • Difficulty coordinating breathing and swallowing • Complaints about pain when swallowing or feeling of food being "stuck" • Difficulty chewing, food spillage from mouth or food remaining in the mouth after meals • Signs of aspiration pneumonia including increased temperature, productive cough, shortness of breath, chest pain
Occupational therapist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide advice on equipment, assistive technology, positioning and seating needs • Suggest modifications that can be made to the environment to facilitate eating and drinking • Provide strategies to promote inclusion and independence in mealtime activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor posture during mealtimes • Difficulty with self-feeding, such as spilling food from spoon, difficulty getting food on spoon, difficulty cutting food • Need for individualized mealtime technology, such as rate controlled cups
Dietitian 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the person's nutrition requirements • Develop meal plans and diet recommendations to address the person's nutrition requirements, in line with food/fluid texture levels prescribed by the Speech Pathologist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unplanned or significant weight loss or dehydration • Unplanned or significant weight gain • Increased nutritional needs • Difficulty planning meals to meet nutritional requirements

Health professional	Role in swallowing and mealtime management	Indicators for a referral
Doctor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate underlying causes of swallowing difficulties and provide advice on treatment options for underlying conditions Work with the person with swallowing difficulties, their family and the team of health professionals to explore ethical considerations around non-oral feeding options (e.g. Nasogastric or Percutaneous Endoscopic Gastrostomy-PEG) Advise and provide referrals for involvement of other health professionals required for the management of swallowing difficulties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of recent review of general health Complaining of pain or discomfort Changes in behaviour, or general health and wellbeing Changes in swallowing, appetite, or weight
Pharmacist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review medications and their side effects (some medications can cause side effects which impact on the process of swallowing) Advise on alternative methods for administering medications for people with swallowing difficulties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulty swallowing medications Concerns regarding side effects of medications
Physiotherapist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommend positioning that will support safe swallowing Monitor respiratory health and mobility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulty maintaining safe body positioning during mealtimes Changes to respiratory health
Dental hygienist; Dentist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advising on optimal oral hygiene Creation of an oral hygiene plan Performing periodic oral care and dental checks Problem-solving issues that may arise when performing oral care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signs or symptoms of poor dental health, including bleeding gums, decaying teeth, bad breath, pain in mouth, etc Problems with performing oral hygiene, such as gagging, vomiting, biting down on the brush

Information adapted from:

Victoria State Government 'health.vic' : <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/patient-care/older-people/nutrition-swallowing/swallowing/swallowing-responding>

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association ASHA: https://www.asha.org/Practice-Portal/Clinical-Topics/Adult-Dysphagia/#collapse_2