

DYSPHAGIA EARLY DETECTION INITIATIVE

Safe Swallowing Strategies

A mealtime reference for patients and caregivers — made for your refrigerator door

Sit fully upright

For every meal and every snack, stay upright at least 30 minutes after eating. No meals reclined or in bed.

Eat rested and alert

Fatigue genuinely worsens swallowing in myositis. If dinner is your hardest meal, tell your SLP. Smaller, more frequent meals can help with mealtime fatigue.

Take small bites and sips

Smaller amounts of food and liquid at one time put less strain and require less effort from weakened muscles.

Slow down

Make sure you are fully finished with one swallow before your next bite starts.

Swallow twice per bite

A second swallow can help reduce and clear residue left behind after the first swallow.

Alternate solids and liquids

A sip of liquid between bites helps wash food residue from the throat down into the esophagus.

Cut the distractions

No eating while watching TV, scrolling, talking on the phone, or driving. Your swallow deserves your full attention.

Keep up daily oral care

A clean mouth directly lowers the risk of pneumonia. (See the oral care guide in this series.)

Call your SLP or doctor if you notice:

coughing or choking during or after meals · a wet or gurgly voice after eating · food sticking in the throat or chest · unintended weight loss · repeated chest infections or pneumonia

Postural strategies like chin tucks or head turns help some people and not others. The only way we would know which strategies are effective is to try them during a swallow study, such as an MBSS or a FEES where we can watch on camera what works and what doesn't

Educational content developed for the Dysphagia Early Detection Initiative by
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This handout does not replace individualized evaluation by a speech-language pathologist or your medical team.

Myositis Support and Understanding