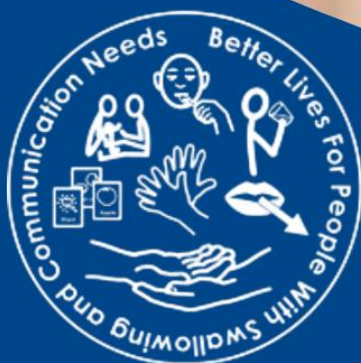




Dysphagia Awareness for People with Learning Disabilities

This information is only for carers
or healthcare professionals supporting
adults with learning disabilities in Somerset

Speech and Language Therapy
Community Team for Adults with Learning Disabilities

www.somersetft.nhs.uk



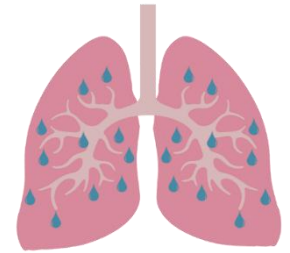
Kindness, Respect, Teamwork
Everyone, Every day



Dysphagia Awareness

Speech and Language Therapy Community Team for Adults with Learning Disabilities

People with learning disabilities are at an increased risk of developing dysphagia (eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties) which can lead to aspiration, choking, chest infections, poor nutrition and/or hydration and reduced quality of life.



The Learning Disabilities' Speech and Language Therapy service specialises in supporting people with a learning disability who have eating, drinking and swallowing needs.

Please contact the Community Team for Adults with Learning Disabilities via CTALDHealthReferrals@SomersetFT.nhs.uk as soon as possible if you observe any of the following:

- Choking incidents
- Increased coughing during and/or after eating and drinking
- Frequent or recurrent chest infections (e.g. two or more in a year)
- Behaviour that might put the person at increased risk of choking e.g. fast pace of eating, cramming, brief or reduced chewing
- A wet, gurgly voice or changes to breathing when eating and drinking
- Changes to the usual pattern of eating or drinking including any changes which might be associated with a change in medication
- Difficulty swallowing
- A reluctance to eat and drink
- Changes to the person's support needs and/or ability to maintain a stable and upright position when eating and drinking

Referrals to the Community Team for Adults with Learning Disabilities do not need to come via a GP and can be sent directly to:
CTALDHealthReferrals@SomersetFT.nhs.uk

Please see our Choking Process Map and Action Plan and Dysphagia Frequently Asked Questions for further information. Follow the link to access our free dysphagia e-learning:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqfCdlozV-s&feature=youtu.be>

Please note: Thickened fluids have risks as well as benefits. Apart from in exceptional circumstances, thickener is not usually prescribed or discontinued without consultation with Speech and Language Therapy. Please follow the links for more information:
<https://www.rcslt.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Thickened-fluids-clinicians-briefing.pdf>
<https://www.rcslt.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Thickened-fluids-patient-leaflet.pdf>

Please note: Speech and Language Therapists manage oro-pharyngeal dysphagia. We do not manage oesophageal symptoms such as vomiting and regurgitation.

