Teesside HOSPICE

Eating and Drinking with Acknowledged Risk Options When Having Difficulty Swallowing

What is Dysphagia?

Difficulty swallowing is called dysphagia.

It can be caused by different illnesses including dementia, stroke, neurological disorders (e.g. Parkinson's disease), learning disabilities, various cancers, acute illness. It can also occur as a result of general deterioration, progressive disease or frailty.

If you or your relative have swallowing difficulty, there may be a risk of food, drinks or saliva "going down the wrong way" and entering the wind pipe or lungs. This is known as aspiration.

Aspiration can be uncomfortable for you or your relative and can result in coughing when eating and drinking.

For some people, we can suggest modified textures or consistencies of food and drink for comfort.

Eating and Drinking with Acknowledged Risk Leaflet

What is Eating and Drinking with Acknowledged Risk?

Eating and Drinking with Acknowledged Risk is the decision to eat and drink despite the risk of choking, aspiration or developing chest infections.

Why?

You may choose to have small tasters with acknowledged risk of aspiration. You may be too unwell to benefit from a feeding tube, or there may be risks of further complications.

What are the benefits of Eating and Drinking with Acknowledged Risk?

Like many others, you may get comfort and pleasure from consuming food and drinks you enjoy. Ingestion is a natural bodily process; there is no procedure required for you to be able to eat and drink normally. You may enjoy eating and drinking with loved ones, and it can also improve your quality of life.

What are the risks of Eating and Drinking with Acknowledged Risk?

You may not be providing your body with the nutrients it requires; you can put your health at risk, as well as lose weight as a result of this. As a result of choking, aspiration and associated chest infections (i.e. aspiration pneumonia), you can become unwell or even die.

Making a Decision

A health professional will discuss your ability to swallow and nutritional needs with you and/or your family members. A Speech and Language Therapist or Dietitian could also help with any questions around swallowing and non-oral feeding you may have alongside this leaflet.

They can discuss the cause of your swallowing difficulty and determine whether it will improve, remain unchanged or worsen in the future.

It is important to consider what is the right decision for you and/or your family member. It is an individual decision. You can also change your mind at any point.

There may be different options available to you; think about how much you value the enjoyment of food and drinks, compared to how strongly you wish to avoid episodes of aspiration from eating and drinking. Once you have made a decision, our health professionals will support and advise you through what happens next.

To speak to someone about anything covered in this leaflet, please consider calling the number below, and one of our friendly receptionists will greet and direct you to our wonderful In-Patient care team:

01642 811064



We are regulated by CQC who can ask for information about us and our patients.

www.teessidehospice.org

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