

Dysphagia service

Dysphagia Service

This information leaflet has been provided by the Department of Speech and Language Therapy to help you understand about eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties in children.

What is Dysphagia?

Dysphagia is when there is a problem with the mechanics of eating, drinking and swallowing safely. Eating, drinking and swallowing is a complex process which involves the muscles of the face, mouth and tongue together with the co-ordination and timing of the swallow. In babies it relates to the safe coordination of sucking, swallowing and breathing. In older children it relates to the safe management of different textures and consistencies that the child needs to maintain a healthy weight.

What will the Speech and Language Therapist do?

On the initial assessment, the speech and language therapist will spend time talking to you about your child's feeding from birth to the current time. The speech and language therapist will observe a typical mealtime and will want to observe him/her eating and drinking a range of different textures and consistencies. This will include some textures that are difficult for your child. They may listen to your child's swallow using a stethoscope.

What will happen next?

Following the assessment the speech and language therapist will give you advice and recommendations.

- They will reassure you if your child does not have dysphagia and offer advice on how to progress to the next stage.
- They will make recommendations on how to modify the food textures and fluid consistencies to ensure that your child eats and drinks safely.
- They may also advise on the safest position to feed your child and on the most appropriate bottles, cups or spoons.
- They may want to link with other professionals involved in your child's care or make referrals to other professionals that can help your child.
- They will provide a report and/or a personal feeding plan. The feeding plan will be explained to you and you will be asked to sign it to confirm that you understand the importance of following the advice.

Contact us

Dunston Health Centre,
Dunston Bank,
Gateshead,
NE11 9PY
Tel: 0191 497 1500

Data Protection

Your information may be used for clinical audit, research, teaching and anonymised for National NHS Reviews. Further information is available in the leaflet Disclosure of Confidential Information IL137, via our website or the PALS Service.

This leaflet can be made available in other languages and formats upon request