

Metropolitan Communication Associates

Presents...

The Swallowing Mechanism: Tips for Feeding Adults

2nd Home Medical Care Center

Friday March 16, 2007

Executive Director:

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Who Am I?

- Marissa Barrera, MS, CCC-SLP is a graduate of Columbia University and is currently working towards her PhD in speech and hearing science. Currently, Ms. Barrera is employed as a medical-speech language pathologist at Trinitas Hospital where she works with children and adults with speech, language and swallowing disorders. Ms. Barrera also has a private practice in New York specializing in the care of adults with neurological conditions and brain injuries.



What Happens When We Get Older?

- As we age the muscles in our bodies change.
- Many seniors notice changes in their body muscle tone, vision, vocal volume, pronunciation, appetite and memory.
- Don't worry! These changes are normal and can be approved upon.



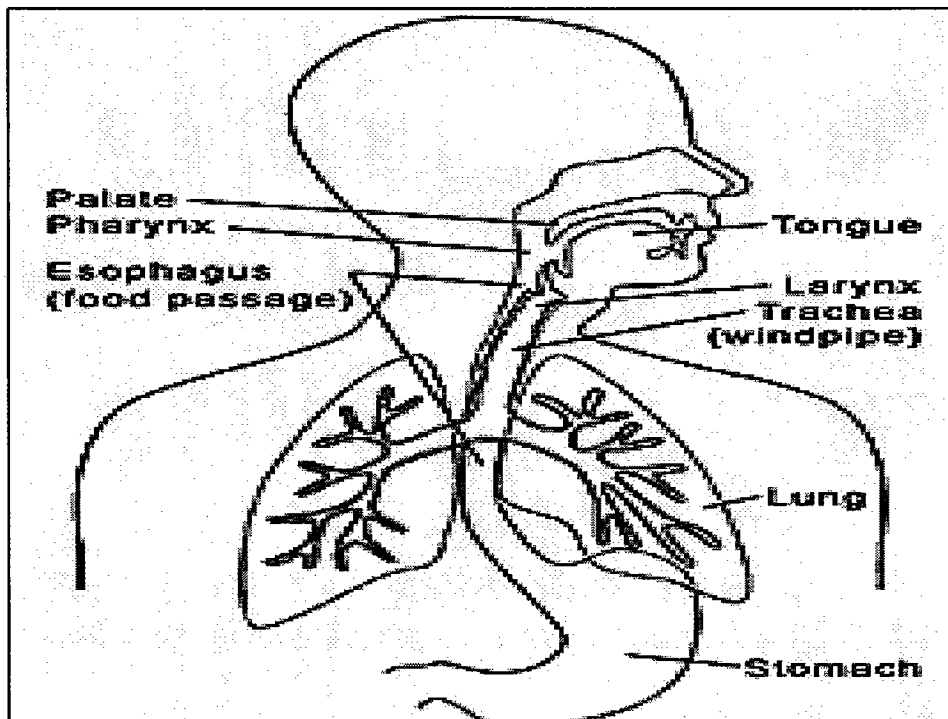
Disorders

- Speech and swallowing changes are very common in older adults (55+).
- **Dysarthria** is a speech disorder that occurs because of weakness in the muscles of the mouth.
- **Dysphagia** is difficulty swallowing.
- Both of these disorders play an important role in safe eating and drinking.



How do you know if some has difficulty swallowing?

- Symptoms include:
 - Dehydration
 - Food getting stuck in the throat
 - **Coughing during and/or after meals**
 - Gurgly/Wet voice when speaking after swallowing
 - Increased or thickened secretions in the mouth that are difficult to clear
 - Recurrent respiratory infections and pneumonia
 - Refusal to eat/loss of appetite
 - Unusual or noisy breath sounds aka stridor
 - Weight loss





How do we swallow?

- Most people swallow more than 1,000 times a day.
- The entire process of swallowing takes less than 5 seconds (*Mouth to Stomach*).
- Normal swallowing involves four-phases...
 - 1. Oral Preparatory Phase
 - 2. Oral Phase
 - 3. Pharyngeal Phase
 - 4. Esophageal Phase



Step 1. Oral Preparatory Phase

- In the oral preparatory phase, food or drink is transported from a plate, table or cup to a person's mouth via a spoon, fork or straw.
- The oral preparatory phase involves many skills such as hand and eye coordination, arm stability and upper body strength.
- As food is brought close to the mouth, the lips open, the jaw lowers and a person's brain recognizes...
ITS TIME TO EAT!!!!
- Lastly, saliva is produced in response to the sight, smell and taste of food.



Step 2. Oral Phase

- In the oral phase, the jaw rises and the mouth closes around the utensil.
- Food is then pulled or “stripped” off the utensil and chewed/mixed with saliva.
- After chewing for a few seconds, a ball of food is formed.
- The tongue then pushes the ball of food to the back of the mouth and into the throat.



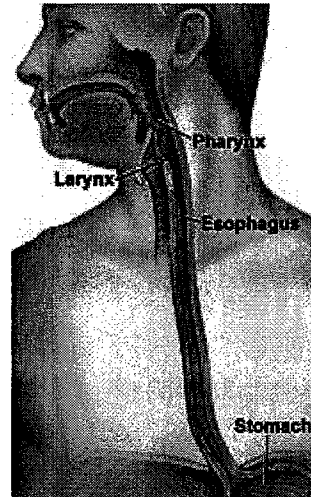
Step 3. Pharyngeal Stage

- The pharyngeal stage starts when the ball of food hits the back of the throat.
- The muscles of the throat contract and push the ball of food down towards the food tube (esophagus).
- Just before the ball of food hits the food tube, the vocal cords shut and seal off the lungs.
- *****This is most important part of swallowing*****
- If the vocal cords do not close tightly, food or drink can slip into the lungs. This is called aspiration and is the most common cause of pneumonia in older adults.



Step 4. Esophageal Stage

- The esophageal stage begins when the food tube is pulled open and the ball of food is pushed down into the stomach.
- If one step goes wrong during the process, *dysphagia* or *impaired swallowing* occurs.



Tips for Feeding Adults: Positioning



- Place elbows on the table. This will keep the upper body and chest steady when eating.
- Keep feet firmly positioned on the floor. This helps the body feel secure.
- **NEVER EAT OR DRINK WHEN RECLINED.**
- Body should be leaning **INTO** the table.



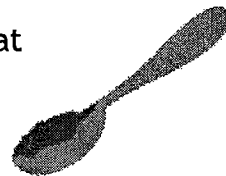
Tips for Feeding Adults: Food Placement

- Solid foods should only be given on a spoon—not a fork.
- Offer one spoonful at a time.
- Offer small amounts of food at a comfortable pace. Do not rush.
- Look for signs that the person is ready for the next bite (i.e., looks up at you, looks at the spoon, etc.,)
- Make sure the person uses his/her lips to “strip” the spoon.
- Periodically, peek inside the mouth and look for *left over food* on the tongue or in the cheeks.



Tips for Feeding Adults: Cups & Plates

- Hot drinks can be served in an insulated cup. Usually these cups have a lid which can stop spillage and help with drinking.
- Don't overfill cups, and consider the use of a straw.
- Serve meals on a raised level. For example put the plate on a small box or stand, so that the food is closer to the mouth. This helps with transferring the food from the plate to the mouth (oral prep phase).
- Alternate between offering food and drink.
- If spillage is a problem use an apron/bib or an easy to clean cloth for the table.





#1 Feeding Mistake

DO NOT "DUMP" FOOD IN SOMEONE'S MOUTH!!



NO!!!!



YES!!!!



Remember as we get older
the brain's changes...

- Muscles get weaker
- Coordination of muscles change
- Attention to task lessens
- Appetite changes
- Tolerance for new foods lessens



What can be done to help?

- Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) are nationally certified and state licensed individuals specially trained in assessment, and rehabilitation of speech, language, reading, writing, voice, cognitive and swallowing disorders.



Strategies- Swallowing

Consult with a doctor, nurse or speech pathologist if you are concerned with someone's ability to eat and drink.

Adults (60+) should have regular swallowing screenings.

SLPs can use strategies to improve hydration, nutrition and safe swallowing. Strategies include:

- Change of diet and special liquids
- Safe swallow strategies/techniques
- Oral Motor Intervention
 - Exercises can help increase the movements necessary for effective swallowing.



More Information

- For more information about speech and swallowing feel free to contact:
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