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DEMENTIA AND DYSPHAGIA

What is dysphagia?

Dysphagia means difficulty swallowing food or liquids. Dysphagia can be dangerous because food or liquids may end up in the lungs instead of the stomach. Coupled with a weakened immune system or poor oral hygiene, dysphagia may increase the risk of infections such as pneumonia.

Dysphagia and Dementia

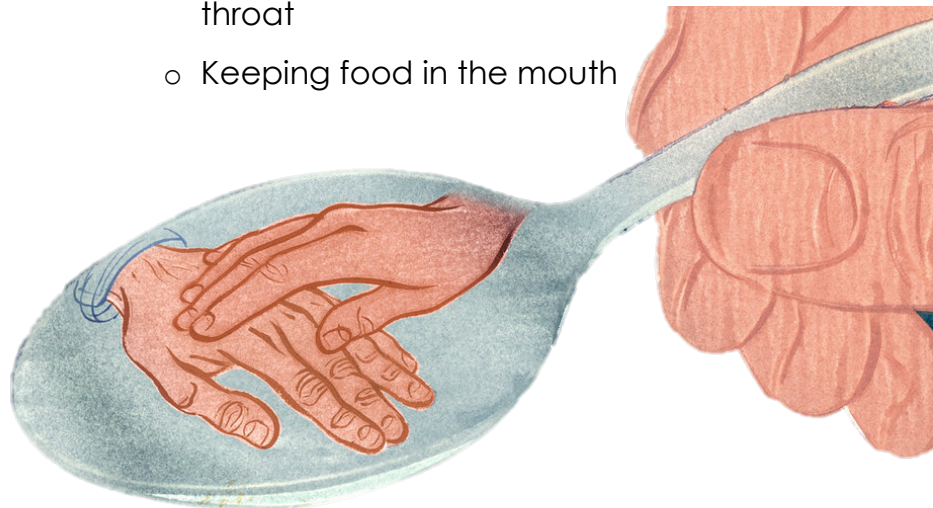
84-93% of people with Alzheimer's develop dysphagia (1). Dysphagia occurs in Dementia patients because the sensory nerves and the muscles involved in swallowing are affected by the changes in the brain.

Signs of dysphagia when eating/drinking

- Coughing
- Frequent throat clearing
- Watery eyes
- Difficulty breathing
- Skin colour changes
- Wet or gurgly sounding voice
- Feeling that food is stuck in the throat
- Keeping food in the mouth

Other signs of dysphagia

- Weight loss
- Chest infections
- Fevers



If you or your loved one has Dementia and shows any of the above signs, please contact me as soon as possible. A swallowing assessment should be conducted to make recommendations regarding the safety of swallowing.

(1) Affoo, R. H., Foley, N., Rosenbek, J., Kevin Shoemaker, J., & Martin, R. E. (2013). Swallowing dysfunction and autonomic nervous system dysfunction in Alzheimer's disease: a scoping review of the evidence. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, 61(12), 2203-2213.