

Swallowing Challenges

Some people with memory problems may forget to swallow or chew their food. This can make meals difficult times. Food may need to be changed or other strategies may need to be considered.

To help make swallowing easier and safer, try these simple tips:

- **Choose soft foods** such as pudding or soup, that do not need to be chewed and that can easily be swallowed. Remember that these foods can still be flavorful and tasty. There are several recipe books to explore for soft foods.
- **Think about learning First Aid** in case choking ever did happen.
- **Sit upright** before and after the meal, to make sure food continues to go down smoothly.
- **Allow for longer meal times**, and enjoy the person's company.
- **Provide gentle reminders to swallow.**
- **Moisten food** with gravy or a sauce to soften it and make swallowing less painful.
- **Thicken liquids** to help with swallowing. Try thickening drinks with a thickening agent, and adding mashed potato flakes, flour, or corn starch to liquids while cooking.
- **Chop, mash, or puree foods** using a blender or a food processor.
- **Try tucking the chin down** when swallowing.
- **Gently stroke the throat** to prompt a swallow.

During the later stages of dementia, these tips may not work or be helpful. In those cases, talking to your doctor is the best line of action. A referral to a dietitian or a swallowing specialist may be needed.