

What to do after choking

You have been directed to this information because the person you are caring for has had a **severe choking episode**. A severe choking episode occurs when the airway is blocked by food and life-saving treatment is required e.g., back blows, abdominal thrusts, calling 999, CPR.

Follow the guidance below for two weeks. After two weeks, if the person's difficulties have resolved, complete the '**Care Home Swallow Care Plan**' to document the recommendations that have helped.

If the person's difficulties have **not resolved after two weeks** or if the person has had **two or more choking episodes** in the last twelve months, please complete and return the '**Adult Community Speech and Language Therapy Referral Form**'.

If the person has choked before or is already on a modified diet:

- Should the item that caused the choking episode have been on their meal? If not, check with the catering team to ensure that they know the person's diet recommendations and that they understand the IDDSI level guidelines.
- Ensure that all swallowing recommendations are being adhered to.
- Provide one-to-one supervision when the person is eating.
- Consider a downgrade of food texture using the IDDSI framework. Trial the next more supportive food texture, as follows:
IDDSI Level 7 Regular → IDDSI Level 7 Easy to Chew
IDDSI Level 7 Easy to Chew → IDDSI Level 6 Soft and Bite-Sized
IDDSI Level 6 Soft and Bite-Sized → IDDSI Level 5 Minced and Moist
IDDSI Level 5 Minced and Moist → IDDSI Level 4 Puree.

If this is the first time the person has choked:

- Avoid the food that caused the choking episode.
- Consider avoiding other high-risk foods. High-risk foods are: dry, flaky, crumbly, hard, tough, chewy, stringy, fibrous, floppy, or have skin, husks, bones, or gristle.
- Add additional moisture e.g., sauces, gravy, mayonnaise, dips, cream, custard.
- Cut food into small pieces, no larger than 1.5 cm x 1.5 cm.
- Consider a downgrade of food texture using the IDDSI framework. Trial the next more supportive food texture, as follows:
IDDSI Level 7 Regular → IDDSI Level 7 Easy to Chew
IDDSI Level 7 Easy to Chew → IDDSI Level 6 Soft and Bite-Sized
IDDSI Level 6 Soft and Bite-Sized → IDDSI Level 5 Minced and Moist
IDDSI Level 5 Minced and Moist → IDDSI Level 4 Puree.

If the person is eating and drinking with acknowledged risks (EDAR):

- Check that there is EDAR documentation in place. This may have come from Derriford or from the Community Speech and Language Therapy Team. If EDAR documentation is not in place, complete the '**Adult Community Speech and Language Therapy Referral Form**'.
- If EDAR documentation is in place, the person or their advocate has accepted that there is an ongoing risk of choking. However, now that a choking episode has actually occurred, the person might wish to reduce their risk of choking by implementing texture modifications. If this is agreed, follow the guidance above regarding gradual texture modification using the IDDSI framework.

Always:

- Ensure that all staff are aware that the person is at a higher risk of choking.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of choking procedures.
- Ensure that the person is sat upright for oral intake, ideally sat out in a chair.
- Provide adequate supervision, ideally on a one-to-one basis for people at higher risk of choking.
- If physical intervention (back blows, abdominal thrusts, CPR) was required, please seek medical review.