



POLICY – MEALTIME MANAGEMENT AND DYSPHASIA

ID No: FBC-18-743

Version: 1.0

Applies to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All Staff
Applicable Standards:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI)• NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators• Aged Care Quality Standards
Applicable Legislation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Aged Care Act 2004</i>• <i>National Disability Insurance Scheme 2011</i>

A range of disabilities and medical conditions are associated with dysphagia, such as congenital syndromes, neuromuscular dysfunctions such as cerebral palsy, neurological disorders such as stroke, cancer, and chronic lung disease. Many people with disability are also prescribed medications on a long-term basis, which can increase risk of swallowing problems.

The risk of accidental choking can be reduced by following expert advice from Speech Pathologists and other specialists. Early identification and management of swallowing problems can minimise risks of health complications.

A proper assessment of a person's swallowing and nutritional needs can reduce the negative impacts of dysphagia and improve a person's safety and quality of life

Definitions

“Dysphagia” is a medical term for any difficulty with swallowing. A person may have dysphagia if they show signs and symptoms such as:

- difficult, painful chewing or swallowing
- a feeling that food or drink gets stuck in their throat or goes down the wrong way
- coughing, choking, or frequent throat clearing during or after swallowing
- having long mealtimes eg finishing a meal takes more than 30 minutes
- becoming short of breath when eating and drinking
- avoiding some foods because they are hard to swallow
- regurgitation of undigested food
- difficulty controlling food or liquid in their mouth
- drooling
- having a hoarse or gurgly voice
- having a dry mouth
- poor oral hygiene
- frequent heartburn
- unexpected weight loss
- frequent respiratory infections.

Mealtime Management Plans

Family Based Care Tasmania (FBC) staff will support a client/participant with dysphagia to have a mealtime management plan written by a health professional. A Speech Pathologist can prescribe and recommend specific actions for a person to eat and drink safely and develop a mealtime management plan for their needs. They will also specify when plans need to be reviewed.

Suspected Dysphagia

If a client/participant shows any sign or symptom of swallowing difficulty, FBC will support them to consult a GP and a Speech Pathologist promptly, so they can assess their swallowing and mealtime assistance needs as well as review their general health. All requests for an assessment by a Speech Pathologist are to be referred to the relevant Manager in the first instance.

FBC Coordinators and Direct Care Workers should understand how to identify and respond to early signs and symptoms of dysphagia and how to support the person to have safe and enjoyable meals.

Supports for people with dysphagia to eat and drink safely during mealtimes

FBC will ensure that:

- Coordinators receive the necessary training and support to implement a mealtime management plan or other mealtime recommendations for swallowing safely and mealtime management.
- meals for clients/participants with dysphagia, and medication taken orally, are prepared as directed and mealtime supports and assistance are provided as recommended by health professionals.
- trained Direct Care Workers are available to monitor people with dysphagia during mealtimes.
- Direct Care Workers know how to respond if a client/participant starts to choke during mealtimes, including when they should call an ambulance.
- mealtime safety issues for people with dysphagia are regularly considered in staff meetings and addressed in day-to-day procedures and care plans.

Regular Review of Medications

FBC will support a client/participant with dysphagia to have their medications regularly reviewed by a GP, the prescribing medical practitioner, or a pharmacist to assess whether the medications may affect their swallowing.

The review can also determine if the medications are suitable when managing risks around swallowing, as several medications have impacts on swallowing, particularly medications for epilepsy or mental health conditions.

Authorised by:



President of the Board

Date:

29/6/22