

**SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY**  
**OBVIOUS AND SUBTLE SIGNS OF SWALLOWING DIFFICULTIES**

OBVIOUS SIGNS	SUBTLE SIGNS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Choking</li> <li>2. Coughing – either during, or immediately after food/drink</li> <li>3. Gurgly/wet sounding voice after food/drink</li> <li>4. Excessive oral secretions</li> <li>5. Rattly sounding chest or diagnosed chest infection</li> <li>6. Raised temperature with no other obvious cause. Particularly if pyrexia occurs following oral intake</li> <li>7. Food pocketed in side of cheek, or in front of mouth</li> <li>8. Drooling of saliva or spilling of food/drink out of mouth (dirty shirt front)</li> <li>9. Report from patient of difficulties swallowing. Often described as food sticking in the throat, taking a long time to eat meals, or coughing on certain consistencies</li> <li>10. Nasal regurgitation (not very common)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coughing <u>after</u> the meal/drink is finished</li> <li>2. Weak cough during or after food/drink</li> <li>3. Throat clearing during or after food/drink</li> <li>4. Loss of voice or weak voice during or after food/drink</li> <li>5. Increased shortness of breath during or after food/drink</li> <li>6. Poor oral hygiene</li> <li>7. Reported or observed difficulty with certain foods or with medications</li> <li>8. Fatigue during meal. Patient unable to finish a whole meal</li> <li>9. Decreased appetite, often linked to patient report of pain/fear during oral intake</li> <li>10. Weight loss, with no other obvious cause</li> <li>11. Watery eyes during swallowing</li> </ol>

**If you have any concerns regarding a resident in your care home please contact the Speech and Language Therapy department on 020 7445 1126.**