SWALLOWING ISSUES

Swallowing issues can result from the disease itself or its treatment. Some medications can cause a dry mouth or sleepiness that make eating and drinking more difficult - seek advice from your pharmacist or healthcare team.

Painful chewing or swallowing, difficulty controlling food or liquid in the mouth, drooling, hoarse voice, coughing or choking before, during or after swallowing, nasal regurgitation or unintentional weight loss can all be signs of swallowing issues that may require further assessment - seek advice from your healthcare team.

If swallowing is a problem, your GP can refer you to a speech and language therapist and/or Dietitian for further assessment. You may be advised to change the consistency of food and drinks to make swallowing easier and safer. A thickener to add to drinks may be prescribed. These general tips may also help:

- Ensure you are sitting up straight, preferably at a table, whilst eating

- Tiredness may increase swallowing difficulties; consider adjusting meal times so you eat when you aren't as tired

- Eat smaller portions more often

- Changing the texture of foods may make them easier to chew and digest; chop, mash or puree foods before serving

- If you have been advised to have pureed food, try to make sure that meals look as appetising as possible. A number of home food delivery services offer pureed meals for people with swallowing difficulties, ask your healthcare professional for further information if you feel this would be useful

- Just because a food is easy to puree it might not be to your taste so make sure you are including foods you like

- A speech and language therapist or nurse may be able to advise you on exercises to strengthen the muscles you use when swallowing

- Equipment such as special cups and spoons designed to place and limit the volume of food in the mouth to make it easier for you to swallow may be available; a speech and language therapist or occupational therapist can offer further advice