

Eating and Drinking with Acknowledged Risk

This fact sheet is for caregivers of children with trouble swallowing who are eating and drinking with acknowledged risk

Eating and drinking with acknowledged risk is:

- Supporting your child to eat and drink while knowing there are risks.
- Choosing not to give your child modified foods and drinks suggested by their speech pathologist or doctor (some or all the time).



You might consider eating and drinking with acknowledged risk when:

- Your child has a long-term condition and their swallowing is not expected to get better over time.
- You think your child's food and drink choices are more important than their swallow safety.
- You don't want tube feeding for your child or it's not medically appropriate.
- During special times like family events or celebrations.

When considering eating and drinking with acknowledged risk, it is important that you:

- Feel informed and supported in your choice
- Understand the options, benefits, and risks
- Feel your wishes and values are respected

Benefits and risks may include:

Benefits	Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> My child can eat and drink what they want<input type="checkbox"/> My child can have food that fits their cultural needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Discomfort, coughing or choking<input type="checkbox"/> Aspiration (food/fluid going into the airway) and possibly causing a chest infection<input type="checkbox"/> Weight loss or dehydration

<input type="checkbox"/> Participate in family celebrations, religious and cultural events <input type="checkbox"/> Bonding and attachment (for bottle feeding or breastfeeding) <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Impact on other health conditions or planned treatment/surgery <input type="checkbox"/> Longer or more hospital stays <input type="checkbox"/> Life-threatening problems <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
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Tips for safer eating and drinking:

- Good oral hygiene:** Clean teeth to remove bacteria and food debris. This lowers the chance of illness or chest infection. Brush teeth twice a day, floss daily and limit sugary foods and drinks.
- Proper positioning:** Always make sure your child is in the best position for eating and drinking. Your allied health team can provide recommendations if you are unsure.
- Avoid eating when tired:** Do not make your child eat if they are too tired or drowsy. Be aware of medicines that affect alertness.
- Take breaks.** Stop assisting eating and drinking if it becomes upsetting or not enjoyable for your child, or if they choke or cough a lot. Try again later if appropriate.
- Don't rush:** Allow your child to take their time with meals.
- Cut food into bite sized pieces:** This lowers the chances of choking.
- Avoid certain foods:** Do not give foods that shatter in the mouth like muesli bars, nuts or popcorn.
- Use different utensils or equipment:** A modified cup, spoon, bottle, or straw might help. Talk to your speech pathologist about special equipment or techniques if your child needs these.
- Change the way some foods feel and move:** Modifying foods may help your child manage them better. Talk to your speech pathologist about what is most suitable.
- Extra care during flu season:** Take extra precautions to avoid infections.
- Other: _____

My child's eating and drinking plan:

What happens if my child becomes sick or their situation changes?

It is important to make plans with your child's medical team about their care if their health gets worse. For example, how a chest infection or weight loss is managed.

If my child's health gets worse, the treatment plan is:

We will check in with you about your decision on:

I can change my mind at any time.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

If you have further questions, please talk with your child's speech pathologist or medical team.

Disclaimer:

The information contained in this fact sheet is general in nature and nothing contained in this fact sheet is intended to be used as a substitute for your own health professional's advice. If you have any questions about eating and drinking with acknowledged risk, please discuss this with your speech pathologist or healthcare team.

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