

Practice Alert Quick Reference Guide

Dysphagia

A medical term for any difficulty with swallowing, and is associated with a wide range of disabilities and health conditions.

## The risks

People with disability, who have dysphagia, are more likely to die from choking or respiratory illnesses (or have serious health complications).

A regular comprehensive health assessment can help to identify health issues earlier.

## The symptoms

Symptoms include:

* difficulty biting or chewing on food
* coughing or choking on food or fluid
* food or drink falling from a person’s mouth.

These can worsen as people age.

## Identification and prevention

Knowledge and training can help support workers identify dysphagia and prevent serious health complications. This includes:

* being able to identify early signs and symptoms
* supporting participant’s to access a GP and speech pathologist
* getting a mealtime management plan
* assistance during mealtimes and regular medication reviews.

## Managing risks

An accurate assessment of a participant’s swallowing and nutritional needs can reduce the negative impacts of dysphagia and improve their safety and quality of life.

## Find out more

For full details on this practice alert and the obligations for NDIS support workers, and access to other training and resources, please visit [ndiscommission.gov.au/workerresources](https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/workerresources)