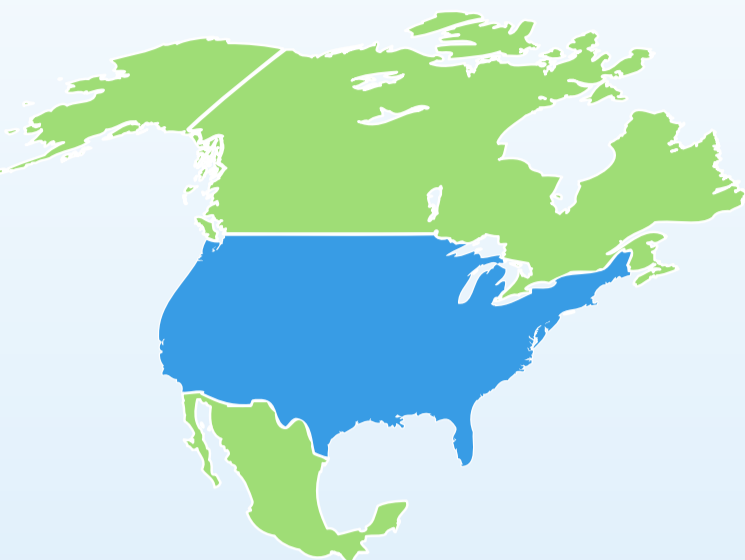


PARKINSON'S & DYSPHAGIA: Symptoms & Strategies

Parkinson's disease, or PD, is a progressive disorder of the nervous system, affecting movement, causing tremors and stiffness. In recognition of Parkinson's Awareness Month in April, the makers of Thick-It® dysphagia nutrition products present these facts and tips for patients, healthcare professionals, and caregivers.



60,000 Americans are diagnosed with PD every year.¹



More than 80% of patients with PD will develop swallowing difficulties over the course of their illness.²



Know the Risks



up to 90% of PD patients experience swallowing and speech impairment.³



In the early stages of PD, swallowing problems (dysphagia) often go undetected by caregivers and patients. Patients may not even be aware when they've aspirated.⁴



Dysphagia can lead to malnutrition, dehydration, and aspiration of food or liquid into the lungs, causing aspiration pneumonia—the leading cause of death in people with PD.⁵



Watch for the Symptoms

Are you, your loved one, or patient experiencing any of these symptoms?⁵ If so, ask your doctor for a referral to a speech-language pathologist (SLP) who specializes in swallowing disorders.

- Losing weight without trying
- Avoiding drinking liquids
- Feeling like there's food stuck in the throat
- Drooling
- Food collecting around the gum line
- Coughing or choking before, during, or after eating and drinking
- Heartburn or a sore throat
- Difficulty keeping food or liquid in the mouth

Strategies & Solutions:



Once diagnosed with PD, patients and caregivers should closely monitor the patient for signs of swallowing issues, such as increased coughing, weight loss, or altered voice quality.⁴



Reduce distractions. Eat one bite at a time, and chew slowly and thoroughly.⁶



Practice the effortful or hard swallow—gather saliva to the middle of your tongue. Keep lips pressed together. Swallow the saliva all at once, as if you are swallowing a grape or pill.⁸



During meals, sit upright at a 90-degree angle with the head tilted slightly forward. Remain upright for at least 15 minutes after eating.⁶



When swallowing, use the chin-tuck by pulling the chin in and down toward the neck.⁷



To reduce the risk of aspiration, an SLP can recommend a modified diet incorporating thickened beverages and puréed foods, such as those in the Thick-It® brand's suite of dysphagia solutions.⁶



A music therapy-based singing intervention has been shown to significantly improve swallow, voice, and respiratory control while enhancing quality of life for people with PD.³



For many patients with PD, a dysphagia diagnosis exacerbates an already stressful and frightening situation. The Thick-It® brand offers a variety of resources to help manage swallowing disorders. Visit [our resources](#) page for tips, tools, and support for patients and caregivers.

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3. Parkinson's Disease Patients' Singing Improves Voice and Swallow Impairment Elizabeth Stegemöller, PhD, MT-BC. Today's Geriatric Medicine. January/February 2018. Vol. 11 No. 1 P. 18. <https://www.todaysgeriatricmedicine.com/archive/JF18p18.shtml>

4. Simons, Janine A. Swallowing Dysfunctions in Parkinson's Disease. Int Rev Neurobiol. 2017;134:1207-1238. doi: 10.1016/bs.irn.2017.05.026. Epub 2017 Jul 15. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28805570/>

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<https://www.parkinson.org/Understanding-Parkinsons/Symptoms/Non-Movement-Symptoms/Speech-and-Swallowing-Problems>

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7. Nam-Jong Paik, MD, PhD, Chief Editor; Elizabeth A Moberg-Wolff, MD. What is the role of the chin-tuck position in the treatment of dysphagia? Medscape.com, March 20, 2020.

8. Best Exercises for Dysphagia. WebMD A to Z Guides. WebMD Medical Reference. Reviewed by Dan Brennan, MD on November 17, 2020. <https://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/best-exercises-dysphagia#1>

Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have about the use of Thick-It® products. The information contained herein is general and is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment in any manner.