

Dysphagia or Swallowing Difficulty

- ✓ Dysphagia simply means problem taking liquid or food from mouth to stomach.
- ✓ Muscles coordination and swallowing reflex is required for normal swallowing process.
- ✓ Damage to nervous system, or head & neck problems can cause swallowing difficulties such as stroke, brain injury, head & neck cancers and injuries.
- ✓ There is risk of aspiration (food or liquid entering the airway), which can lead to pneumonia and chronic lung disease. Aspiration is often a life threatening condition.
- ✓ Coughing during or right after eating or drinking, wet or gurgly sounding voice during or after eating and drinking, extra effort and time needed to chew or swallow, food or liquid leaking from the mouth or getting stuck in mouth or throat, recurring pneumonia, chest congestion after eating, weight loss or dehydration from not being able to eat enough are signs and symptoms of dysphagia.
- ✓ A speech pathologist takes a careful medical history, looks at strength and movement of muscles involved in swallowing process and perform tests to evaluate swallowing problems.
- ✓ Depending on the cause, symptoms, and type of swallowing problem, speech pathologist recommends exercises, positions, strategies, specific food and liquid textures for safe swallow.
- ✓ Family members or caregivers should also help in treatment for better outcome.