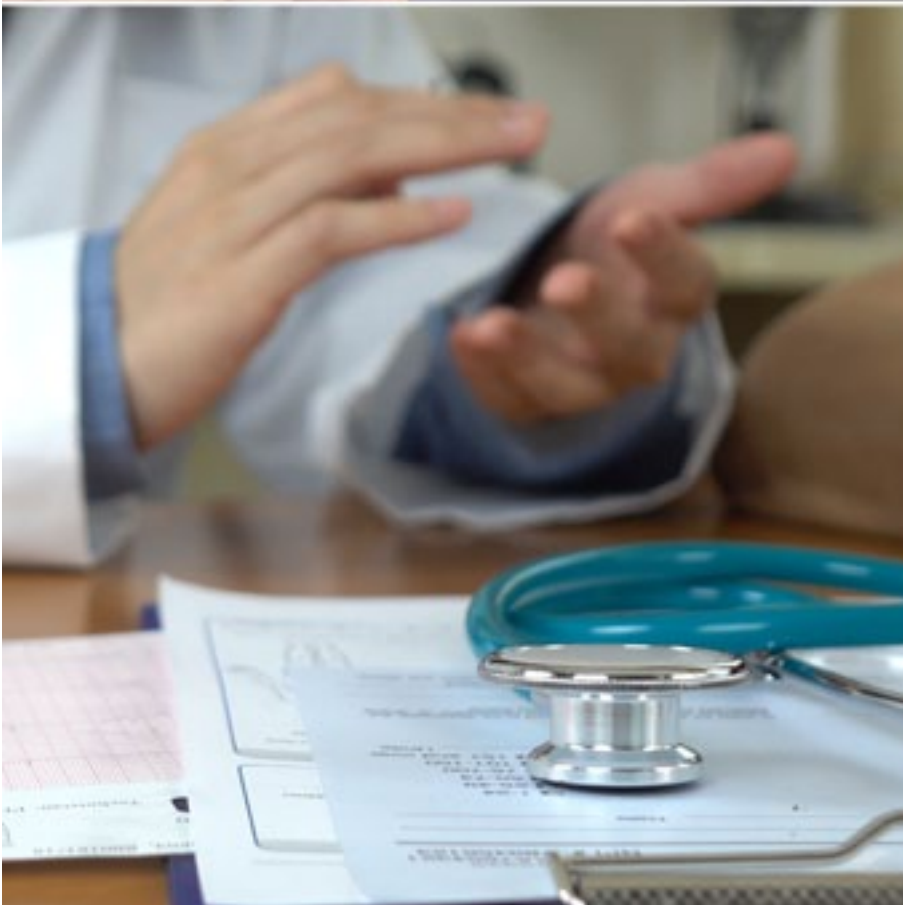


## Swallowing Disorders (Dysphagia)



### Overview

Swallowing is a complex process. It begins in your throat, and it ends as food or liquid is pushed into your stomach. A problem at any step along the way can make swallowing hard for you.

### Causes

Swallowing disorders can be caused by a wide range of issues. You may have a problem chewing, which causes you to swallow large pieces of food. You may have a problem with the muscles of your esophagus (that's the tube food and liquids pass through on the way to your stomach). You could have a tumor, scar tissue or other problem causing a blockage in this tube. Down lower, your esophageal sphincter (the muscular ring that lets food and liquid pass into your stomach) may not work properly. And, you could have weakness in the muscles of your throat. In many people, this weakness is linked to a neurological problem. A disorder such as multiple sclerosis or Parkinson's disease can cause it. So can a stroke or a spinal cord injury.

### Symptoms

Swallowing disorder symptoms can include coughing and gagging. You may drool. You may feel like food gets stuck in your throat or chest. It may hurt to swallow. You may have heartburn, and your voice may be hoarse. You may bring food back up when you eat. You may not be able to swallow.

### Treatment

Treatment depends on the reason for your swallowing difficulty. Your healthcare provider can create a plan that's right for you.