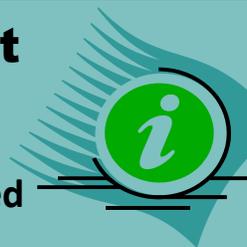


ASPIRATION

ASPIRATION is the breathing or sucking in of any foreign material into the throat or lungs through the mouth or nose. Some examples may be: food, fluid, saliva, medications, or any non-edible object.

SOME FACTS about ASPIRATION



- Aspiration can be triggered by choking.
- It may happen silently or over time without an awareness it is taking place.
- Swallowing difficulties increase the risk of aspiration.

RISK FACTORS (Causes)



Recognition of the following conditions will help alert you to potential risks:

- GERD (acid reflux)
- cerebral palsy
- seizures
- swallowing problems
- pica behaviors
- aging
- hiatal hernia (stomach problems)
- food stuffing/eating too fast
- history of choking or aspiration pneumonia
- side effect of medications
- inability to chew or swallow properly
- improper positioning for adequate swallowing
- being fed by someone else

WHAT to WATCH FOR



There are many behaviors which can signal the potential for aspiration and include:

- eating slowly
- afraid of, or not wanting to eat
- gagging/coughing/choking -- during or after meals
- refusing food or fluids
- drooling
- food or fluid falling out of the individual's mouth
- eating in odd or unusual positions
- throwing head back when swallowing
- swallowing large amounts of food or quickly stuffing mouth with food
- refusing to eat unless assisted by favorite caregiver
- vomiting or odor of vomit after meals

WHAT TO DO



- **OBTAIN SWALLOW STUDY** from a professional if symptoms occur or continue.
- **FOLLOW THE DIET** prescribed by doctor or dietician.
- **ENSURE DIET GUIDELINES ARE SPECIFIC:** food consistency, size of food pieces (such as 1/4”), and the texture of food.
- **PROVIDE A SLOW, UNDISTRACTED PACE** of eating.
- **PROPER POSITIONING** during and after meals.
- **AVOID FOOD OR FLUID BEFORE BEDTIME.**
- **KEEP IN UPRIGHT POSITION** for at least 45 minutes after meals.
- **ENSURE ALL STAFF ARE TRAINED** in assisting individuals with positioning, eating, and appropriate supervision..
- **CPR & FIRST AID CERTIFICATION** (which includes training in the Heimlich Maneuver).

EMERGENCY



Call 9-1-1 IMMEDIATELY (and begin CPR if necessary) when you observe any of the following signs with the individual:

- **TURNING BLUE**
- **HAVING DIFFICULTY BREATHING OR STOPS BREATHING**
- **FEELS VERY ILL**
- **BECOMES UNCONSCIOUS (does not respond)**

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THE ASPIRATION FACT SHEET is #3 in a series of HEALTH INFORMATION FACT SHEETS compiled by the DDD Quality Assurance Unit. Fact Sheets #1-#4 are based on the “FATAL FOUR” as referred to by the Oregon Department of Health Services Developmental Disabilities Nursing Manual. Fact Sheets are available upon request and posted on the Division’s Website: https://www.azdes.gov/developmental_disabilities/ (Click on “News & Events”).

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