SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY
Paediatric Dysphagia

Patient Information Leaflet (North)
Speech and Language Therapy Service
Longlands Child Development Centre
Westbourne Road, Lancaster, LA1 5EE
Tel: 01524 34331 Fax: 01524 842556
What is paediatric dysphagia?
Paediatric dysphagia is difficulty with eating and / or drinking in children. It may involve difficulty with chewing, co-ordinating lip and tongue movements, or swallowing.

Why is a child with feeding difficulties referred to a speech and language therapist?
The Speech and Language Therapist’s role is to support the development of communication skills in children. Some speech and language therapists have undertaken extra training in the area of dysphagia (feeding and drinking difficulties). A speech and language therapist will often work together with other professionals (e.g. dietician, health visitor, physiotherapist).

Who has dysphagia?
Children may have eating and drinking difficulties if they
- were born prematurely.
- have specific conditions such as cerebral palsy or Down’s syndrome.
- were born with cleft palate.
- have difficulties with gastro-oesophageal reflux.
Some children have isolated eating and drinking difficulties that may be related to sensory difficulties. This is particularly so for children with autism (ASD) and those with a difficult feeding history.

What difficulties could a child with dysphagia experience?
A child may have difficulty with the following:
- Aspiration (food or drink going down the wrong way into the lungs).
- Choking episodes.
- Poor nutrition and weight loss.
- Poor health.
- Food refusal.
- Distress at mealtimes.
- Difficulty moving on to new food textures.
What does the speech and language therapist do?

- Visits usually take place at home. They may happen in other settings (e.g. hospital, school, nursery).
- Gather background information about the feeding difficulties.
- Assess your child’s eating and drinking skills (through looking inside your child’s mouth, watching them eating).
- Identify significant risks such as choking.
- Give advice on helping your child with feeding and making mealtimes more fun. For example, advice on types of food that are easier to manage; encouraging chewing through using different foods.
- Monitor your child’s progress with eating and drinking and give new advice when necessary.
- Refer on to other professionals. For example, dietician, paediatrician, ENT consultants, specialist feeding team.

How to Refer for a Dysphagia Assessment

Anyone can refer to speech and language therapy if there are concerns about how a child is managing food and drink. The child’s GP or paediatrician should be made aware of this referral. Please use the contact details on the front of this leaflet to make a referral.
Options available
If you’d like a large print, audio, Braille or a translated version of this booklet then please call 01253 655588

Patient Relations Department
For information or advice please contact the Patient Relations Department via the following:

Tel: 01253 655588
email: patient.relations@bfwh.nhs.uk

You can also write to us at:
Patient Relations Department
Blackpool Victoria Hospital
Whinney Heys Road
Blackpool
FY3 8NR

Further information is available on our website: www.bfwh.nhs.uk

References
This booklet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this booklet are available on request from:
Policy Co-ordinator/Archivist
01253 303397

Useful contact details
Hospital Switchboard:
01253 300000

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For the best way to plan your journey to any of the local sites visit our travel website:
www.bfwhospitals.nhs.uk/departments/travel/