

Risk Management to Reduce Choking within Developmental Disabled Population

From an Occupational Therapist's Perspective

I. Identify factors that increase the risk of choking

- a. Inappropriate feeding positions
- b. Poor oral motor control
- c. Inappropriate feeding behavior
- d. History of choking/aspiration

II. Preventative Measures

- a. Inappropriate feeding positions
 - Wheelchair in full up right position if it has TIS
 - Head rest in good repair to provide needed support
 - Provide physical assistance to maintain head in up right position or use pillow or rolled up towel to increase head flexion for safe feeding
 - Consult with PT or OT to modify seating system to maximize postural control for safe feeding
- b. Poor oral motor control
 - Provide oral motor exercise, or oral stimulation as recommended
 - Practice daily oral hygiene, at least 2x per day to provide extra oral stimulation (consider using an electrical toothbrush)
 - Texture management
 - Thicken liquids to vary consistency
 - Moisturize food with fluid, sauce or gravy
 - Feed slowly with small bites and small sips
 - Alternate food and fluid to facilitate swallowing
 - Use appropriate adaptive feeding equipment to control bolus size or liquid influx
- c. Inappropriate feeding behavior
 - Supervision
 - Texture modification
 - Add fluid to moisturize foods
- d. History of choking/aspiration
 - Monitoring/supervision
 - Texture management
 - Conduct frequent bedside swallowing evaluations