

Guideline for the use of thickeners

1. What needs to be thickened?

The Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) has recommended that you have thickened fluids. It is important to thicken fluids to the consistency recommended by your SLT to reduce the risk of difficulties with swallowing. These risks include choking and developing chest infections.

Your recommended liquid classification:	
Stage 1 (single cream consistency)	
Stage 2 (syrup consistency)	
Stage 3 (yoghurt consistency)	

Please see the Grampian Dysphagia Management Guidelines for detailed descriptions and pictures of each consistency.

All fluids should be thickened:

- Hot and cold drinks
- Soups
- Sauces (sweet or savoury)
- Milk (including milk added to cereal)
- Fizzy juice
- Nutritional supplement drinks
- Liquid medication should be thickened following advice from your pharmacist or GP.



Some soups when blended are already thick especially if they contain cream or potato. Check the recommendation and decide if you need to thicken the soup further to achieve the right consistency.

You may find some drinks more palatable than others when thickened.

2. How do I mix the thickener?

Using a fork or whisk

Add the thickener to a small amount of the liquid while mixing with a fork or whisk. Then slowly add the rest of the liquid to ensure a smooth consistency.



- Continue mixing for about 30 seconds and leave the liquid to stand for at least 1 minute to finish the thickening process.
- Pour the liquid into another glass or cup to check the consistency is correct and to remove any residue or lumps. If it is not the right consistency, add more thickener to thicken or more fluid to thin it and mix as above.

Using a shaker

(This method works best for milk based drinks)

- Add the liquid and thickener to the shaker and shake vigorously for 30 seconds.
- Leave the liquid to stand for at least 1 minute to finish the thickening process.
- Pour into a glass through the built in strainer to check the consistency and ensure it is free from lumps before drinking.

3. Useful tips

- Make sure that the fork or whisk is dry before use.
- Always use a container large enough to allow mixing without spillage and for fizzy drinks which may “fizz over” on thickening.
- Give the drink a stir before serving to ensure it is still the right consistency and consume within a period of 2 hours.
- Chill drinks and only thicken them before serving, rather than pre-thickening and then storing in a fridge.
- Allow hot drinks to cool slightly before thickening.

If you have any questions about thickening fluids or about the swallowing recommendations made by the Speech and Language Therapist please contact your SLT.

This leaflet is also available in large print. Other formats and languages can be supplied on request. Please call Quality Development on (01224) 554149 for a copy. Ask for leaflet 1392.

