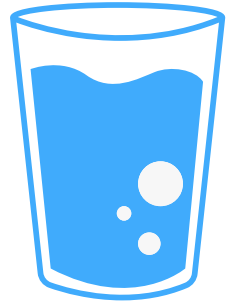


# Think before you thicken

If you, or someone you care for, use or are considering using thickened fluids to help you with drinking or swallowing difficulties here are some things to consider.

If you have any questions or concerns about thickened fluids, speak to your GP, speech and language therapist or healthcare advisor first before considering making any changes to your drinks.



## What are thickened fluids?

Thickened fluids can be drinks that are naturally thicker, like smoothies, or drinks which can be made thicker by adding things such as pureed food or thickening powders or gels to them. Thicker drinks travel more slowly in the mouth and can make it easier to swallow for some people.

## How thickened fluids can help

- Thickened fluids can help you swallow more easily as they move more slowly in your mouth
- Thickened fluids may help stop liquid coming out of your mouth as you drink (dribbling)
- They can stop drinks going the wrong way into your lungs which could cause other healthcare problems
- They can make it easier to swallow medication

## How thickened fluids can cause problems

- Drinks made with thickener need to be carefully made and as advised by the manufacturer
- Thickened drinks might make your poo hard or runny
- Thickeners can change the taste as well as the texture of drinks - some people don't like this change
- There is a risk that thickened fluids could go into your lungs and cause serious health problems
- Thickened drinks might make you want to drink less, making you feel thirsty and putting you at risk of dehydration
- The use of thickeners in fluids might stop certain medications working properly

Remember – you or the person you care for has a choice in the use of thickened fluids and you can change your mind at any time. Talk to your healthcare professional about what is best for you.

