

Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) Department

Patient Information



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Information

If you need this information in large print, easy read, on audiotape or in another language please call 0800 7838058 or e-mail pals@dchft.nhs.uk

If you wish to obtain a list of the sources used to develop this information leaflet please call 0800 7838058 or e-mail patient.info@dchft.nhs.uk

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How To Thicken Drinks using Nutilis Clear

For people who require thickened drinks (thickened fluids) because of swallowing difficulties (dysphagia) where there is a risk of drink 'going down the wrong way'



Patient Name:

Speech and Language Therapist:

Dietitian:

Date:

Why do I need to thicken my drinks?

You have been advised to thicken all your drinks to help you swallow more safely. To do this, you will need to use a special thickening powder.

You must thicken all drinks, hot, cold or alcoholic, and also things like gravy, sauces or soups. Ordinary drinks are not suitable until they have been thickened, even water.

Thickened drinks are safer because they move more slowly and are easier to control in your mouth. Therefore they are less likely to 'go down the wrong way'. Thickened drinks may also help to counteract any loss of sensation in your mouth or throat.

You have been recommended fluids to:

You will be prescribed tins of thickening powder by your GP. There are several brands. The more powder you add to a drink, the thicker the fluid will become.

Inside the tin of thickener, there is a purple measuring scoop - it may 'be buried' by the powder. Use the scoop whenever possible to help you measure out the correct amount of powder.

The amount of thickening powder you need to add to get the right thickness of fluid will vary depending on how long the tin has been open and the type of drink you are putting it into.

Please ensure that the tin lid is kept on, and read the label regarding the expiry date.

Nutilis Clear Mixing Instructions

Stage 1 (Syrup) Consistency Fluid

This is the least thickened fluid. It should be the thickness of the syrup in tinned fruits, or tomato juice, or single cream. It can still be drunk through a straw.

In a mug (200mls) add 1 scoop of thickener

Stage 2 (Custard) Consistency Fluid

Medium thickness fluid is called 'custard consistency fluid'. This is fluid, which is thickened to the thickness of a tub of natural, unset yoghurt or thick double cream/jersey cream. This type of fluid can be drunk from a cup but not through a straw.

In a mug (200mls) add 2 scoops of thickener

Stage 3 (Pudding) Consistency Fluid

This is the thickest type of thickened fluid. It is fluid, which is thickened to the thickness of mousse or instant dessert such as 'Angel Delight'. This type of fluid is too thick to be drunk from a cup and needs to be taken from a spoon.

In a mug (200mls) put 3 scoops of thickener

How to thicken drinks

1. Pour the drink out as usual.
2. Stir the drink gently with a teaspoon. Continue to stir, sprinkling the correct amount of thickener from the scoop onto the moving liquid.
3. Leave to stand for about 1 minute.
4. Before serving, check there are no lumps in the fluid. If so, remove them. Also, check the thickness of the fluid again before serving, as the thickness can change over time.

General tips

- Always keep the lid on the tin of thickener, or it will get damp and its thickening power will change
- Milky drinks and milky supplement drinks are harder to thicken and may need more powder. They need to be stirred or whisked really well before adding thickening powder. You could use a blender or shaker in a beaker with a lid before adding the powder
- If you are finding it very difficult to mix the thickening powder into milky supplements, ask about having fortified puddings instead, or ask your GP to prescribe pre-thickened supplements
- Do not keep home-made thickened drinks for longer than 24 hours

Thickening by the jugful!

It is a good idea to mix up a jugful of thickened drink in the morning and keep it in the fridge to use during the day. This saves time and effort.

You will need:

- A jug that holds at least a litre of fluid
- A measuring jug.
- A glass/beaker that holds 250mls of fluid when full (use a measuring jug to check)
- A fork
- **Either** 1 litre of fruit juice **or** 1 litre of squash (made from 250mls of concentrated squash mixed with 750mls cold water)

1. Pour **either** 1 litre of fruit juice **or** 1 litre of diluted squash into the jug
2. - For a **syrup** consistency drink, fill $\frac{1}{2}$ of the glass or beaker with thickener
- For a **custard** consistency drink, fill $\frac{3}{4}$ of the glass or beaker with thickener

3. Slowly add the thickener to the jug of drink, whilst stirring all the time with the fork (see directions under 'How to Thicken Drinks').

Frequently asked questions...

I don't like thickened drinks; do I still have to have them?

There's no doubt about it, thickened drinks aren't what we're used to, but if they are easier or safer to swallow then they're worth persevering with. Speech and Language Therapists try everything they can to avoid recommending thickened drinks, so if you are recommended them then you really do need them.

Why is getting enough fluid so important?

Our bodies need fluid for **many** different reasons, here are just a few:

- To help prevent constipation
- To help prevent bladder and urinary infections
- To help our brains work efficiently
- To help our skin stay strong and healthy

How much should I be drinking?

Every day, aim to have between 8-10 drinks. Ideally you should be having about 2 litres of fluid a day. Alcoholic drinks don't count! If you are drinking enough, your urine should be quite pale in colour.

Remember that some foods contain a lot of liquid. Providing they are the right thickness for you, they can help you get the right amount of fluid every day. The following can all help:

- Smooth, thick soups
- Yoghurts
- Custard
- Mousse
- Stewed or pureed fruit
- Blancmange, instant whip desserts

Different drinks to try

Hot drinks

Different people have different tastes, but many find hot thickened drinks are particularly strange at first. Many people find thickened coffee is nicer than thickened tea, and that thickened malted drinks or hot chocolate are quite acceptable. If you really don't like hot thickened drinks, stop having them and replace them with cold thickened drinks instead.

Cold drinks

It helps if cold drinks really are **cold** (from the fridge rather than at room temperature) as it makes them more refreshing.

Sometimes drinks with a **sharper** flavour are more refreshing when thickened, sometimes they can also help speed up a slow swallow, so try the following:

- Lime cordial
- Cranberry juice or squash
- Grapefruit juice or squash

'Naturally thicker' cold drinks

Some cold **fruit** drinks are 'naturally thick' and may be more enjoyable:

- Tomato juice
- Prune juice
- Mango, apricot or peach juice
- 'ready-made' fruit smoothies

Some cold **milky** drinks are 'naturally thick' and may be more enjoyable:

- 'ready-made' milkshakes, e.g. 'Frijj'
- 'ready-made' yoghurt smoothies

At home, you can experiment with making your own smoothies by blending smooth fruits such as mango, banana, tinned apricots, tinned peaches or tinned pears with juice or yoghurt.

Baileys is a naturally thicker alcoholic drink.

You must check that any 'naturally thick', shop bought or homemade thickened drinks match the consistency of thickened fluid that you have been recommended.

Additional Information:

Websites for further information:

- www.nutricia.co.uk
- www.dysphagiaonline.com
- Site provided by Novartis Nutrition

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