

Service: **Adult Speech and Language Therapy**

Managing Your Swallowing Difficulties

Thickened Fluids



Name: _____

—

DOB: _____

Date: _____

Why?

You have been advised to drink '**Thickened Fluids**' by your Speech & Language Therapist. This is because there is a risk that normal thin drinks will go down the wrong way (into your lungs instead of your stomach) due to your swallowing difficulties. The thick drinks move slower in your mouth and throat and are therefore easier for you to swallow safely.

The thickness of fluid that you require depends on your specific swallowing difficulty. You will have been told whether you need to thicken your drinks to a Stage 1, Stage 2 or Stage 3 consistency.

How?

You will need a tub of thickening agent such as 'Nutilis', 'Thick and Easy' or 'Resource Thicken Up Clear'. These will be prescribed by your doctor. Please see the following sheets for more information.

What?

Most drinks are able to be thickened effectively.

When?

You should continue to follow these recommendations until such

a time as a Speech & Language Therapist or Doctor tells you otherwise.

Who?

If you have any questions/concerns about these recommendations, contact your Speech & Language Therapist:

Name: _____

(see back page of leaflet for contact details)

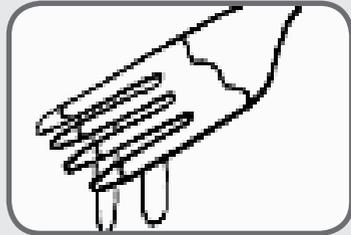
Additional Information (e.g. fluid guidelines, positioning recommendations, medication administration):

Recommended Consistencies for Thickened Fluids

Your Speech & Language Therapist will have recommended a specific level of thickness of drinks that you need in order to make drinking safe. These will be referred to as either 'Stage 1, Stage 2 or Stage 3' (or sometimes may be referred to as 'Nectar Thick, Custard Thick or Pudding Thick'). The table below describes the consistency of these stages to help make sure that you are preparing the fluids to an appropriate thickness.

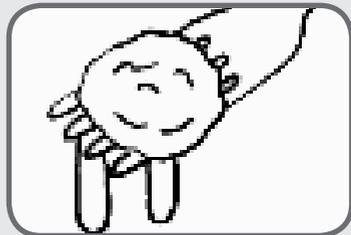
Stage 1 (sometimes called 'Nectar Thick')

- It can be drunk from a cup
- It can be drunk through a straw
- It runs fast through the prongs on a fork
- It will leave a thin coating on the fork/spoon/cup



Stage 2 (sometimes called 'Custard Thick')

- It can be drunk from a cup
- It is too thick to drink through a straw
- It may be easiest to take this drink from a spoon
- It flows slowly when poured
- It slowly drips in 'dollops' through the prongs of a fork
- It leaves a thick coat on the back of a fork/spoon/cup



■ Stage 3 (sometimes called ‘Pudding Thick’)

- It is too thick to drink from a cup
- It is too thick to drink through a straw
- It needs to be taken with a spoon
- It is not possible to pour
- It will hold a cohesive shape on a spoon
- It will sit on a fork and not flow through the prongs
- NB: if a spoon/fork is able to stand upright unsupported in the drink, it is too thick



If you have access to the internet, a short video produced by Fresenius Kabi demonstrates the consistency of these different stages of fluid thickness:

www.dysphagia.org.uk/thick-and-easy/how-to-use-in-drinks/national-descriptors

How Much Thickener to Use

Each brand of thickener is slightly different – please read the instructions provided with the thickener (often written on the back of the tub) to determine how much thickener you should use to achieve the recommended thickness.

What You Will Need

- Measuring Jug
- A drink to be thickened
- Jug/glass/cup/mug
- Fork/whisk (small sauce whisk can be useful)
- Tub of thickening agent (such as 'Nutilis', 'Resource Thicken Up Clear' or 'Thick and Easy') which will be prescribed by your doctor

How to Thicken Your Drinks

If using Nutilis or Thick & Easy

1. Pour the drink into the jug/glass/cup
2. Add the recommended amount of thickener to the drink using the scoop provided with the thickener (see section below about amount of thickener to use)
3. Stir vigorously with a fork/whisk until the powder has been dissolved (approx 20-30 seconds)
4. Stir gently for a further 1-2 minutes
5. Leave to stand for a few minutes (the drink will continue to reach its desired thickness during this time)
6. Serve

NB: some people find it easier to carry out steps 1-3 with half the amount of drink in the cup to avoid spillage, and then add the rest of the drink to the cup and continuing with points 4-6.

If using Resource Thicken Up Clear

- 1.** Put the recommended amount of thickening powder into the jug/glass/cup first
- 2.** Add the drink
- 3.** Immediately stir briskly until the powder has completely dissolved (approx 1-2 minutes)
- 4.** Leave to stand. If thickening water/tea/coffee leave for 1 minute, if thickening milk/juice etc leave for a little longer (until the desired thickness has been achieved).

If you have access to the internet, a range of videos made by Fresenius Kabi (producers of Thick & Easy) are available to view which demonstrate how to thicken drinks:

<http://www.dysphagia.org.uk/thick-and-easy/how-to-use-in-drinks>

Making the Best of Thickened Fluids

People can find that drinking thickened fluids is not as pleasant as drinking normal drinks. However, remember that thickened fluids have been recommended to you to minimise problems with your swallowing and to keep you as healthy as possible.

Here are some tips to try to make drinking thickened fluids more pleasurable:

- Thickened water is the most unpleasant thing to drink – try adding fruit juice/squash to improve the taste
- Some drinks taste nicer than others when they are thickened. Experiment with different drinks (even if you would not have drunk them previously) to find out what drinks you enjoy the most. Some drinks to consider trying would be different fruit juices (e.g. orange, apple, pineapple, grape etc), different fruit squashes (e.g. lemon, blackcurrant, grapefruit, tropical etc), cola, lemonade, hot chocolate, coffee.
- You are able to thicken alcoholic drinks if you fancy a small tippie (however, check with your doctor that this is medically appropriate for you to be drinking alcohol before doing this)
- Avoid serving drinks at room temperature, use water from the fridge or cold tap but do not add ice as this will dilute the thickness.
- Sometimes drinks will continue to thicken over time. Make sure that your drink is not thicker than it needs to be (especially if you made the drinks some time ago.) If it is thicker than needed, either dilute it with some more liquid (to the correct consistency) or prepare a new drink

- Different brands of thickener have slightly different tastes. Ask your GP to prescribe different brands so that you can decide which one you prefer. The main ones available are 'Nutilis' made by Nutricia, 'Resource Thicken-Up Clear' made by Nestle and 'Thick & Easy' made by Fresenius Kabi.
- If you find it difficult to thicken drinks using a fork/whisk, contact your Speech & Language Therapist or the manufacturer of your brand of thickener to request a 'shaker' to help you prepare the drinks. This is a bit like a cocktail shaker and some people find it easier to use.
- Pre-made thickened juices are available from some manufacturers (see details on the next page), some people find these more palatable
- Some people find that thickening nutritional supplement drinks (such as Fortisip, Fortijuce, Fresubin) is difficult (with a tendency for the drinks to go lumpy), there are some pre-thickened drinks available that your GP may be able to prescribe for you (see details on the next page)
- If you are prescribed these thickened nutritional supplement drinks, you can heat them up in the microwave to make a hot thick drink (e.g. add coffee granules to a vanilla flavoured pre-thickened supplement to make a nice cup of thick milky coffee)

Pre-Thickened Drinks

If you are having difficulties preparing thickened drinks or are struggling to drink them due to their palatability, talk to your GP about the possibility of prescribing some pre-thickened drinks. Please note that some GP surgeries may not be able/willing to prescribe these.

Pre-Thickened Juice

Resource Thickened Drinks (by Nestle)

Available in:

- Orange and Apple Flavours
- Stage 1 (syrup thick) and Stage 2 (custard thick)



Pre-Thickened Nutritional Supplements

(only suitable following assessment by a Dietitian and Speech and Language Therapist)

Nutilis Complete (by Nutricia)

Available in:

- Strawberry, Vanilla and Chocolate Flavours
- Stage 1



Fresubin Thickened (by Fresenius Kabi)

Available in:

- Vanilla and Wild Strawberry Flavours
- Stage 1 and Stage 2



References:

National Patient Safety Agency, “Dysphagia Diet Food Texture Descriptors” (2011)

Dietitians Association of Australia and The Speech Pathology Association of Australia Limited, “Texture-modified foods and thickened fluids as used for individuals with dysphagia: Australian standardised labels and definitions”, *Nutrition & Dietetics* 2007; 64 (Suppl. 2): S53–S76 DOI: 10.1111/j.1747-0080.2007.00153.x

http://www.health.qld.gov.au/nutrition/resources/txt_mod_tf.pdf

<http://www.ndr-uk.org/pdf/consistency/100505FluidThickening.pdf>

<http://www.nutlis.com/uk/pdf/Nutlis%20mixing%20guidelines.pdf>

http://www.dysphagia.org.uk/media/documents/TE_Insert_HotCold.pdf

http://www.nestlenutrition.co.uk/healthcare/gb/products/Documents/201012_Resource_Thickenup_Clear_Datacard.pdf

http://www.nestlenutrition.co.uk/healthcare/gb/products/Documents/201012_FINALTUC_Preparation_Guide.pdf

<http://www.dysphagia.org.uk/thick-and-easy/how-to-use-in-drinks>

**PATIENT
APPROVED** 

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www.nbt.nhs.uk

If you or the individual you are caring for need support reading this leaflet please ask a member of staff for advice.

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