Beacon Hospital

DEPARTMENT OF SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY

How to Thicken Drinks

Thickened drinks can be recommended to manage a difficulty with swallowing (dysphagia). By altering the consistency of fluids, they may be easier to control in the mouth and are less likely to catch in the throat and "go down the wrong way" into the airway. Thickened drinks move more slowly in the mouth and throat. This gives more time to swallow safely and easily. This can reduce the risk of a chest infection (aspiration pneumonia).

Fluids can be thickened by adding a thickening powder (e.g. Nutilis / Thick N Easy) to your drinks. By adding a specified amount of thickening agent to your drinks, it will be modified into a safe consistency. It is extremely important that **ALL** fluids or liquid foods are thickened to the recommended amount. This includes water, soup, tea, alcohol, liquid medications and nutritional supplement drinks.

Please check with your speech therapist to see <u>what consistency</u> your drinks need to be modified to (e.g. grade 1, grade 2 or grade 3). This will tell you how much thickener needs to be added to your drinks.

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Grade 1 *very mildly thick fluid*	Grade 2 *mildly thick fluid*	Grade 3 *moderately thick fluid*	Grade 4 *extremely thick fluid*
200mls: 1.5 scoops	**200mls: 2 scoops**	**200mls: 3 scoops**	**200mls: 4 scoops**
Fast flow	**Steady flow**	**Slow flow**	**No flow**
Pours quickly from a cup but slower than regular, unmodified fluids No effort to drink through a straw	Pours quickly from a cup but slower than Grade 1 fluids Leaves a thin coating of residue in the cup Effort to drink through a straw Similar to a 'syrup'	Similar to custard Cohesive and pours slowly Difficult to drink using a straw, even with a wide bore straw	Similar to thickness of pudding or mousse Cohesive and holds its shape on a spoon Not possible to pour into the mouth Not possible to drink through a straw Deliver with a spoon

Directions for Thickening

For best results, use a **shaker** for thickening your drinks. Use the **scoop** contained in the thickening tin to measure your thickener.

1. Add 200mls liquid to shaker.
2. Add specified amount of thickener to the liquid (e.g. 2 level scoops for syrup consistency)
3. Place the lid on the beaker.
4. Shake well up and down
5. Leave for 60 seconds.
6. Check consistency is correct

Shaker

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7. Pour into a glass/cup to serve

If adding powder into a glass however, mixing with a whisk or fork gives good results.

Which drinks taste best when thickened?

- Juices: easy to thicken and taste the same
- Dilutable squashes

Tips on thickening the following:

- Tea: Thickener should be added after the drink has cooled slightly & after any milk / sugar have already been added
- Fizzy drinks: popular as they maintain their flavour once thickened – allow to ‘go flat’ or use a fork to reduce fizz before adding thickener to prevent it ‘fizzing up’

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