



Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust



Level 4: Extremely thick fluids

Information for patients,
relatives and carers

Speech and Language Therapy (SLT)

My **speech therapist's** name is: _____

Telephone number: _____

SLT recommendations

To thicken drinks to a safe consistency they need to be:

Level  Extremely thick

Other recommendations:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Why do I need thickened drinks?

Normal drinks move very fast and can easily run off the back of your tongue before you are ready to swallow.

Your swallow has been assessed by a qualified speech and language therapist. The assessment revealed that if you do not use thickener in your drinks you will be at increased risk of:

- Choking.
- Coughing.
- Liquids going down the wrong way.
- Repeated chest infections.
- Pneumonia.

How do I thicken drinks?

Use a prescribed thickening powder.

Follow the instructions on the tin to get the right consistency.

The instructions on the tin will tell you:

- How many scoops of thickener required in a drink to achieve the right consistency.
- In what order to add the thickening powder to the cup/glass (i.e. add powder first into a dry cup or add powder to the drink).

Prescribed thickening powder: _____

Number of scoops required: _____ per 200ml

Method: _____

Know the volume of drink that you will thicken to ensure the right amount of powder. This will help you get the right consistency.

***Please store the thickening agent in a safe and secure place.
Accidental ingestion of the dry powder can be fatal.***

What is Level 4, Extremely thick?

- Cannot be drunk from a cup.
- Usually eaten with a spoon.
- Falls off spoon in a single spoonful when tilted.

Fork test:

- Fork pressure test – prongs on fork can make a clear pattern on the fluid, which remains after the fork is removed.
- Fork drip test – sample sits on a mound on the fork.

Fluid intake

Aim to eat/drink 8 cups or glasses or 6 mugs of fluid per day.

If you need to gain weight, include fortified drinks during the day:

- Milky tea or coffee made with fortified full cream milk.

- Malted drinks or hot chocolate made with fortified full cream milk.
- Milkshakes or smoothies (commercially-prepared or homemade).
- Commercially-prepared build-up drinks such as ‘Complan’ or ‘Meritene’ (available in sweet and savoury flavours).

Guidelines for safe drinking

- **Alert / Posture:** Make sure you are alert and sitting upright rather than lying back.
- **Take small sips:** It is usually best to have small sips of drink throughout the day rather than trying to drink large amounts in one go.
- **Take your time:** Do not hurry, relax and take your time.
- **Minimise distractions:** Try to ensure that you eat and drink in a quiet, distraction-free environment. Don’t talk when drink is in your mouth.
- **Do not use a spouted cup unless recommended by your speech and language therapist:** A spouted cup encourages people to tip their head backwards – increasing the risk of fluid going into the lungs. The safest thing to drink from is a normal glass or mug. However, if this is not possible, try using a straw or spoon-feeding liquids.

In accordance with the International food and fluid descriptors labelled IDDSI May 2018 (www.IDDSI.org)

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

Department: Adult Speech & Language Therapy, 0118 938 2136

Reviewed January 2023.

Next review due: January 2025