

Pain, Eating and Swallowing



Meal enjoyment is crucial for wellness and quality of life. Dental pain and medication side effects can interfere with mood, chewing, swallowing, and appetite.

Oral pain from dental abscesses and broken teeth may be recognized by poor meal intake, facial expression, crying, moaning, or calling out, irritability, aggression, and rapid breathing.

Did you know, [more than 70](#) common medications can cause [esophageal injury](#), and [at least 160](#) medications can interfere with swallowing? Medication side-effects can also increase acid reflux symptoms, cause nausea and constipation, and impact taste and smell.

When you notice choking, poor meal intake, or requests for nitroglycerin or antacids for chest pain and acid reflux:

- Request a consultation to improve swallowing ability.
- Work with the interdisciplinary team and prescriber to adjust medication administration times to when the person is awake, hydrated and sitting up (e.g., mid-morning and late afternoon). Avoid disrupting sleep; preserve mealtimes for food enjoyment and nutritional intake.
- Provide fluids after oral medications to support swallowing and absorption.
- Request pharmacist assessment to identify and deprescribe medications with more possible harms than benefits.

Looking for more resources? Check out:

- [Fast Facts: Oral Pain](#)
- [Observing for oral health changes](#) (36-minute video)
- [Managing care-responsive behavior](#) (25-minute video)