



You notice the patient has difficulty swallowing their medicines



Collect information (see Section 4 of the e-LfH session)

Collect information about the patient's medicines

- List the medicines they can and can't take.
- For tablets and capsules, make a note of their size and shape. Does the patient have difficulty taking liquid medicines?
- Remember to report missed doses of medicines to the appropriate person in your organisation.
- Patients are at risk of harm if they miss doses. This is especially important for certain medicines such as blood thinners or medicines for conditions such as epilepsy, Parkinson's disease or after a transplant.

Does the patient also have difficulty swallowing food or drink?

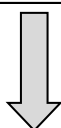
Some people without dysphagia (swallowing difficulties) have trouble taking medicines.
Some people with dysphagia can swallow tablets and capsules.



NO

People who can swallow food and drink don't need to be referred for a swallow assessment.

Try techniques to help them swallow. Take medicines one at a time with a sip of water with pauses in between.



YES

People who have difficulty swallowing food and drink should be seen by a Speech and Language Therapist (SLT).

Has the patient already had a swallow assessment by a SLT?



NO

Consider referral to SLT for a swallow assessment.
Follow your local procedure for SLT referral. It is good practice to discuss any potential referral with the GP.



YES

Check the SLT report to see if the patient needs texture-modified food or fluid, or if there are other recommendations.



Ask for advice about the patient's medicines (see Section 5 of the e-LfH session)

Who to ask

If you are a carer, contact your supervisor, line manager, or the care home manager. They will be able to contact one of the following:

For patients in their own home:

- Pharmacist at the patient's GP surgery (the 'practice pharmacist')
- Community pharmacist

For patients in a care home:

- MOCH (Medicines Optimisation in Care Homes) team if there is one (contact your local CCG)
- Pharmacist at the patient's GP surgery (the 'practice pharmacist')
- Community pharmacist



How they can help

The pharmacist or pharmacy team will be able to recommend the best options depending on the medicines and the patient's ability to swallow. They may suggest different options for different medicines (see Section 2 of the e-LfH session for information on dosage forms). They will suggest any unnecessary medicines are stopped.

The pharmacist/pharmacy team may liaise with the patient's GP to make sure the appropriate medicines are prescribed and included in the patient's MAR (Medicines Administration Record) chart.



Changes to the patient's medicines the pharmacist or pharmacy team might recommend

They may choose different options for different medicines (see Section 6 of the e-LfH session)

OPTION 1 Switching to a different dosage form

For example, switching from a tablet to a liquid, dispersible tablet or patch.

Sometimes they will recommend a change to a different medicine.

Remember that patients who need thickened fluids can not take thin liquid medicines.

OPTION 2 Modifying the dosage form

Changing a tablet or capsule by:

- Splitting a tablet in half
- Crushing a tablet
- Dispersing a tablet in water
- Opening a capsule

These options are not suitable for all medicines.

Some tablets and capsules should not be modified:

- Those with special coatings
- Medicines that can cause harm to the person crushing or opening them

For more information and directions on how to crush tablets and open capsules see Section 7 of the e-LfH session.

OPTION 3 Switching to a 'Special' liquid medicine

'Special' liquid medicines need to be ordered by the pharmacist especially for the patient.

They are usually only used when there isn't another option as they are unlicensed and often expensive.

Patients may find it easier to swallow medicines with food, or thickened fluids if they need them.

See Section 8 for Giving medicines with food and Section 9 for Medicines options for people who need thickened fluids