

## Oral Medication Administration Guidelines for Adult Patients with Dysphagia

### General Principles Regarding Altering Medications (splitting, crushing, opening, dissolving):

- Determine if any medication is on the WRHA [List of Cytotoxic or Non-Cytotoxic Hazardous Medications](#) and if so, follow WRHA Policy - [Safe Handling of Hazardous Medications \(Cytotoxic and Non-Cytotoxic\)](#).
- Do not crush or split cytotoxic/hazardous medications [pantoprazole, alendronate, dabigatran, sustained release/enteric coated products (e.g. medications labeled SR, CR, MR, TR, XL, EC)].
- Best practice is to administer one medication at a time. Mixing of altered medications is unpredictable and has not been studied.
- Altered medications should be used immediately (e.g. medications that are crushed, cut, mixed in liquid, puree, or other food)
- \*Polyethylene Glycol (PEG) 3350 powder changes consistency of thickened fluids. Do not mix with starch-based pre-thickened fluids, Thicken Up® or equivalent. For best results add it to 1 tablespoon (15 mL) of applesauce. If this is not possible, consult dietitian or SLP for individualized option. Additional pre-thickened fluids should be given separately to increase the efficacy of PEG powder.
- Contact the pharmacist regarding specific medication/case as required.
- Patient specific guidelines may be noted in the individualized care plan.

Clinical Situation	Example Diet Orders	Recommendations								
This patient may NOT be alert and may NOT be able to be positioned	NPO/No Active Diet order	<p><b>Contact physician. Obtain SLP consult if appropriate.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult pharmacist for suggestions for alternate routes of administration.</li> <li>• Do not give medications by mouth until physician consulted or assessed by SLP if appropriate.</li> <li>• Note: there are risks associated with withholding certain medications as well as administering medications in a patient unable to protect their airway.</li> </ul>								
This patient is able to be positioned and is alert	NPO except for medications	<p><b>Obtain SLP consult if appropriate.</b></p> <p><b>Crush tablets or open capsules and mix into small amount of applesauce/pudding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check with pharmacist to see if crushing/opening is permitted, if not, inquire if liquid form available.</li> <li>• Mix liquid medication into puree (e.g. pudding). Try to change texture of pudding as little as possible.</li> <li>• Mix controlled release beads (e.g. HYDROMorphone CR or potassium chloride ER (Micro K®)) with pureed food and <b>DO NOT CRUSH BEADS</b>. Inform patient <b>NOT</b> to chew medication.</li> </ul>								
<b>Dysphagia with liquids</b>										
This patient requires <b>THICK</b> liquids and eats solid food	Mildly Thick Fluids	<p><b>Mix liquid medication in applesauce or other pureed food. For *PEG 3350 powder see General Principles above. Ice cream is not recommended due to thinning consistency as it melts.</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Liquid Medication Volume</th> <th>Volume of pureed food</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Less than 10 mL</td> <td>1 Tablespoon (15 mL)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10 to 30 mL</td> <td>2 – 3 Tablespoons (30-45 mL)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Greater than 30 mL</td> <td>Consult pharmacist regarding dividing doses. Thicken fluid to required consistency as per diet order.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Liquid Medication Volume	Volume of pureed food	Less than 10 mL	1 Tablespoon (15 mL)	10 to 30 mL	2 – 3 Tablespoons (30-45 mL)	Greater than 30 mL	Consult pharmacist regarding dividing doses. Thicken fluid to required consistency as per diet order.
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Moderately Thick Fluids										

<p>This patient can NOT swallow tablets/capsules with WATER i.e. medication with water represents a “mixed consistency”</p>	<p>No thin fluids mixed with solids</p>	<p><b>Give tablets/capsules WHOLE in a small amount of applesauce or other pureed food.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mix controlled release beads (e.g. HYDROmorphone CR or potassium chloride ER (Micro K<sup>®</sup>)) in pureed food. <b>DO NOT CRUSH BEADS. Inform patient NOT to chew medication</b></li> <li>• Talk to pharmacist to dispense smallest size of tablet or capsule if possible.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Dysphagia with solids</b></p>		
<p>This patient can swallow liquids but CANNOT receive solid food.</p>	<p>Clear Fluids Full Fluids Blenderized</p>	<p><b>Administer medications in liquid form</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult pharmacist to request medications in liquid form or alternate route for medication administration.</li> <li>• Check with pharmacist to see if crushing meds or opening capsules is permitted.</li> <li>• If no liquid medication available, crush tablets or open capsules and mix in at least 10 mL of warm water per medication, or mix with recommended consistency of liquid.</li> <li>• Mix controlled release beads (e.g. HYDROmorphone CR or potassium chloride ER (Micro K<sup>®</sup>)) in recommended liquid consistency. <b>DO NOT CRUSH BEADS. Inform patient NOT to chew medication.</b></li> </ul>
<p>This patient can swallow pureed/minced foods.</p>	<p>Pureed Total minced Minced</p>	<p><b>Finely crush tablets or open capsules, ideally one medication at a time, mix into a small amount of applesauce or other pureed food.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mix controlled release beads (e.g. HYDROmorphone CR or potassium chloride ER (Micro K<sup>®</sup>)) in pureed food <b>and DO NOT CRUSH BEADS. Inform patient NOT to chew medication.</b></li> <li>• Contents of capsules may be removed and mixed in pureed food.</li> <li>• <b>*PEG 3350 powder see General Principles above.</b></li> </ul>
<p>This patient may have difficulty swallowing large tablets/capsules or prefer smaller size.</p>	<p>Soft Standard</p>	<p><b>Cut large tablets in half</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult pharmacist for medication alternatives if tablet can't be split (e.g. tablet is SR, CR, ER, Cytotoxic, or Non-cytotoxic hazardous) or medication is a capsule.</li> </ul>

*Adapted from Sunny Brook & Women's Hospital Safety Initiative for Medication Swallowing (SIMS), St. Boniface Hospital and Concordia Hospital. Adapted by: Dysphagia Working Group September 2019; Approved by Nutrition Advisory Subcommittee January 2020 and WRHA Medication Quality Safety Committee March 2020.*