

Myasthenia Gravis: Tips for Speaking and Swallowing Information

Myasthenia Gravis Affects Speaking and Swallowing.

You may struggle with eating, swallowing and speaking. People with Myasthenia Gravis may experience weakness and fatigue of muscles in the lips, tongue, jaw and throat as a result of the difficulty of sending messages from the nerves to these muscles.

Tips For Swallowing

- If your doctor has prescribed a medicine called Mestinon, eat 30 to 45 minutes after taking it.
- Come to meals rested. If you have difficulty, stop eating and take a rest.
- Watch for difficulty when eating including: coughing, clearing your throat, food sticking in your throat.
- Talking during meals will also tire these muscles.
- Try eating six smaller meals during the day if eating 3 full meals is tiring.
- Swallow or take a sip of liquid to help clear food if you feel it sticking in your mouth or throat. Cough up any food if you need to.
- Multiple swallows may be necessary to clear the residue in your throat.
- Avoid chewing gum. This can tire your muscles for swallowing.
- If you have difficulty swallowing, you may need to change food textures (how the food feels in your mouth), you may need to eat pureed (blended) foods or minced (finely chopped) foods.

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- Food with two textures (for example: cereal and milk or some soups) needs more swallowing control. They may be harder to eat. If you have difficulty with these mixed foods try eating textures separately.
 - a) When eating cereal, for example try the following:
 1. drain milk from spoon
 2. eat the cereal
 3. follow with milk on the second spoonful
 - b) blend soups
 - c) Change your meal. i.e. Eat cereal with yoghurt instead of Milk. The thicker texture is easier to manage.
- Include all food groups to maintain a healthy diet. Finely chop or blend meat. The less chewing required the less tiring.
- Monitor yourself to notice any changes in swallowing

See your doctor right away if:

- you get a chest infection ☒
 - a fever ☒
- your medical condition gets worse

Tips For Speaking

Another area of frustration caused by Myasthenia Gravis is difficulty with speech. You may experience vocal fatigue with symptoms appearing or worsening with continued or extended speech. Your speech may be soft or nasal. You may slur your speech or speak in a monotone pitch.

The following are suggestions to consider to help manage your voice.

- Take lots of breaks to listen when speaking to people. This will give you a chance to rest.
- Consider the times you need to speak during the day. Mornings are often better.
- Schedule important talks 30 to 45 minutes after taking your medicines.

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- Rest after a long conversation.
- Try to use a quiet room so that you use less energy when you need to speak.
- Stand or sit closer to the person you are speaking to. You will use less effort than if you speak or shout to someone across a room.

**The above information on swallowing and speaking was referenced from the University Health Network of Toronto, Patient Education pamphlet "Tips for Speaking and Swallowing" written by Karen White and Carolyn Chalmers. The Mayo Clinic Patient Education, was also referenced.*