

**Aspiration pneumonia** is a type of pneumonia caused by the infiltration of something other than air, such as food, saliva or other substances into the lungs. The condition is typically caused by bacteria that normally reside in the mouth or nasal passages.

### RISK FACTORS

- Dysphagia (difficulty swallowing) can come from aging, many disorders, illnesses or damage
- Tube feeding
- Poor oral health & care
- Weakened immune system
- Alcoholism
- Frailty

### SYMPTOMS

- Bluish skin color (cyanosis) indicates worsening condition – escalate immediately
- Cough, sometimes with yellow or green sputum
- Difficulty swallowing
- Fatigue
- Fever
- Shortness of breath (dyspnea)
- Chest pain
- Halitosis (bad breath)
- Sweating
- Low oxygen levels

This material was prepared by Health Quality Innovators (HQI), a Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organization (QIN-QIO) under contract with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Views expressed in this material do not necessarily reflect the official views or policy of CMS or HHS, and any reference to a specific product or entity herein does not constitute endorsement of that product or entity by CMS or HHS. 1250W/HQI/QIN-QIO-0718-01/29/24

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## ASPIRATION PNEUMONIA

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## DIAGNOSIS

- Difficulty breathing and fever after an aspiration event are common early warning signs
- Chest X-ray
- Blood test – white blood count (WBC) is typically elevated
- Sputum and blood cultures may be obtained in some settings (sputum may be contaminated by mouth germs)

## TREATMENT

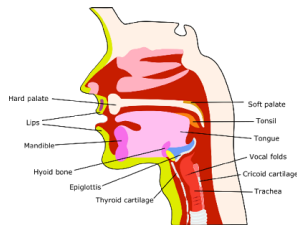
- Swallowing evaluation/Speech therapy consult
- Antibiotics: may last 1-2 weeks
- Some people may choose palliative care

## PREVENTION (3 Rs)

**Raise** the head of bed to an angle of 30 to 45 degrees (especially while eating or drinking).

**Remind** to chew slowly and completely before swallowing.

**Routine** oral care-at least daily.



*swallowing is complex*



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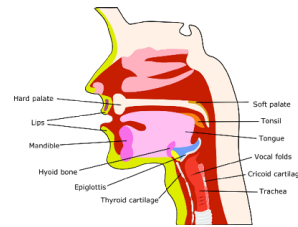
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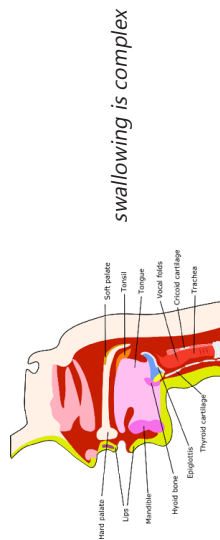
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