Warning Signs of Possible Swallowing Problems

1. Coughing and/or throat clearing with swallowing
2. Food in mouth, on tongue or pocketing in cheeks after swallowing/eating
3. “Gurgly” or “wet” voice quality
4. Nasal regurgitation of food/liquid
5. Weight loss or dehydration
6. Complaint of “lump in the throat” or food sticking when swallowing
7. Complaint of pain or discomfort when swallowing
8. Unexplained elevated temperature
9. Chest X-ray showing infiltrates/aspiration pneumonia
10. Meal takes a long time to complete
11. Difficulty handling oral secretions, saliva or excessive drooling
12. Changes in respiration (difficulty breathing) following swallowing/eating
13. Tiredness and/or shortness of breath with eating/drinking
14. Effortful chewing

Other red flags

1. Changes in thinking skills, for example confusion
2. Reduced alertness
3. Poor judgment or impulsivity
4. Motor-planning disorders (apraxic)
5. Slurred speech
6. Reduced appetite, refusal to eat/drink
7. Pneumonia
8. Needing to be fed

The information presented is intended for general information and educational purposes. It is not intended to replace the advice of your health care provider. Contact your health care provider if you believe you have a health problem.