

# Difficulties with Swallowing (Dysphagia) in Neurological Injuries or Conditions



Greater Manchester  
Neurorehabilitation & Integrated  
Stroke Delivery Network

## Oral Stage Difficulties (Mouth)

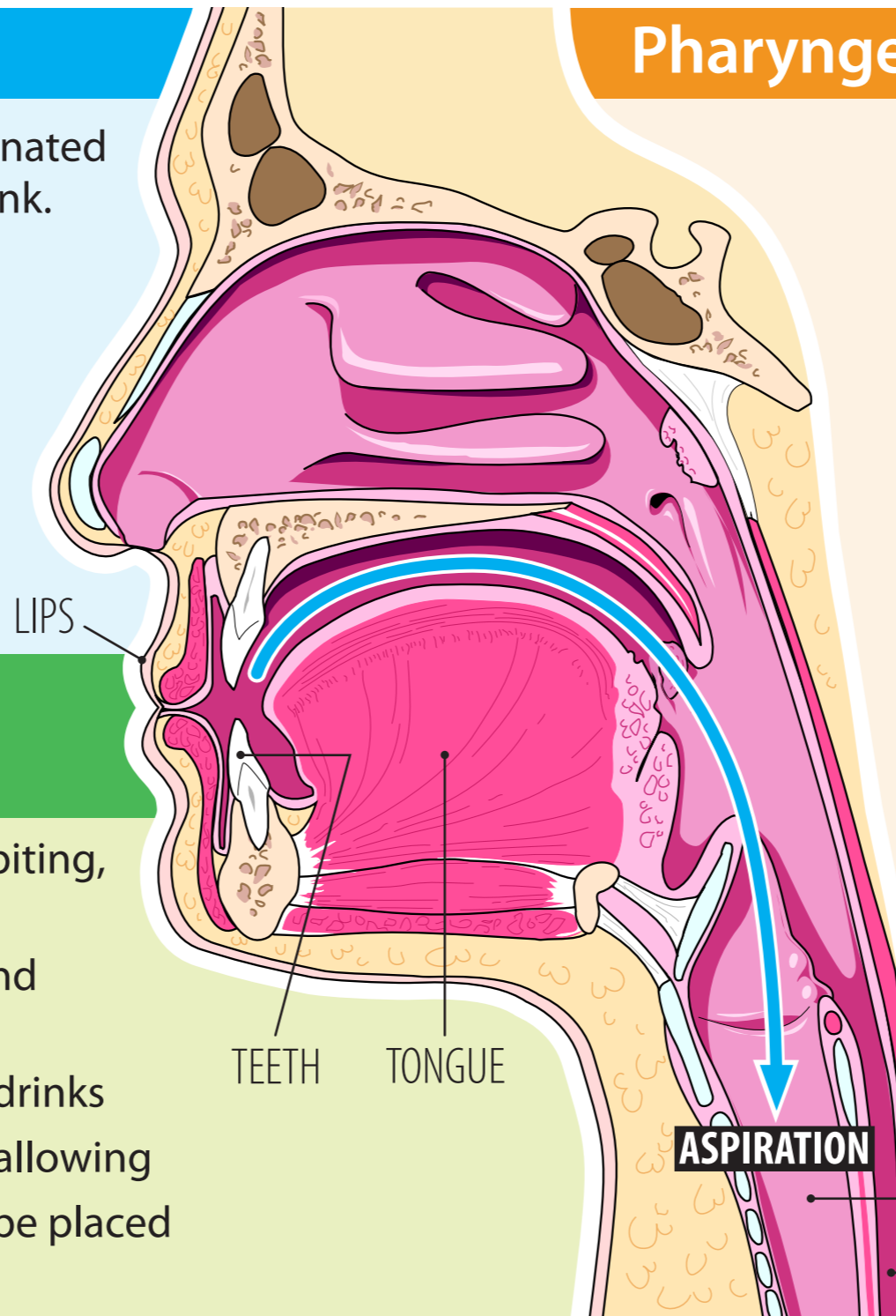
The muscles in the mouth may be weak or uncoordinated which can cause difficulties controlling food and drink.

### Some signs of oral stage difficulties:

- Food left in the mouth
- Difficulties chewing
- Difficulties moving food backwards to swallow
- Salivating / drooling
- Changes in sensation or taste

## To help make swallowing safer you may be asked to:

- Do **exercises** to strengthen the muscles used in biting, chewing and swallowing
- Eat a **modified diet** e.g. softer or pureed foods and avoiding other foods
- Drink **modified fluids** e.g. adding a thickener to drinks
- Adopt a different posture or position to assist swallowing
- If swallowing is considered unsafe, patients may be placed on nil-by-mouth status to ensure safety



## Pharyngeal Stage Difficulties (Throat)

**Aspiration** is where food or drink is 'going down the wrong way' towards the lungs.

### Some signs of aspiration during or immediately after swallowing:

- Coughing / choking
- Voice sounding wet or gurgly
- Persistent throat clearing
- Increased breathlessness

### Consequences of aspiration may be:

- Frequent chest infections
- Pneumonia
- Weight loss
- Death

**For further information contact a Speech and Language Therapist**