

Children's Speech and Language Therapy Thickening Drinks

Why does my child need thicker drinks?

- Children with swallowing difficulties

Some children find it difficult to swallow drinks safely.

Thin drinks can move quickly in a child's mouth. This can make it difficult for them to control. The drink can go down 'the wrong way' into your child's lungs. This can cause chest infections.

Thicker drinks move more slowly. They can be safer for children to swallow. They are less likely to go 'the wrong way'. Your speech and language therapist will tell you if your child needs to have thicker drinks.

- Children with reflux

Thicker drinks can also help children with reflux (gastro-oesophageal reflux). Reflux happens when your child swallows food and drink but this comes back up again from their stomach. This feels uncomfortable for your child. They can even be sick.

Thin drinks are lighter, so they are more likely to move back up your child's food pipe (oesophagus). Thicker drinks are heavier. They are more likely to stay in your child's stomach.

What drinks can I offer?

Some drinks are naturally thicker. Examples include smoothies and some yoghurt drinks.

A doctor can also give you a thickener on prescription. You can add this thickener to your child's drinks.

Your speech and language therapist can tell you how thick to make your child's drinks. They can show you how to test the drink so that you know it is the right thickness. Make sure that all the drinks you give to your child are the right thickness.



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Why Temperature Is Important

The thickness of drinks changes with their temperature. A thick liquid that is cold or chilled will be thicker than if it is served at room temperature, or heated.

The International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI) Framework gives a standard way to describe food textures and drink thickness. Your therapist will tell you what IDDSI level to make the drinks. Most thickener packets say the temperature at which their thickener should be mixed and served in drinks.

Adding Thickener to Drinks

- Check the packet to see what temperature is recommended.
- The drink will be thinner if you serve it warmer than recommended.
- The drink will be thicker if you serve it cooler than recommended.
- Test the thickness to make sure you are offering drinks at the correct texture for your child's individual needs.
- Babies can prefer to drink warm milk. As thickened milk cools it will become thicker and harder for the baby to suck through a teat. This can cause them to tire more quickly.

Please discuss the use of thickener with your Speech and Language Therapist and visit <https://iddsi.org/why-temperature-is-so-important/> for more information.



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