

Speech Pathology
Royal North Shore and Ryde Hospitals

What to do after Radiotherapy/Chemotherapy

Speech Pathologists provide swallowing and communication assessment and treatment. Radiotherapy, chemotherapy and head and neck surgery can make swallowing and communication hard.

Swallowing and communication difficulties can happen months or years after you finish your cancer treatment. If swallowing or communicating becomes harder after your treatment is finished, please contact our department to be seen as soon as possible by our speech pathology team.

What to do after you've finished treatment

- Aim to return to eating and drinking your normal diet
- Look for signs of aspiration (food and drink going down the 'wrong way' into the airway) e.g. coughing/choking, wet gurgly voice, difficulties breathing when eating and drinking or unexplained fevers/chest infections
- Continue with the swallowing/voice/speech exercises you were given during your treatment
- Try eating snacks like dry biscuits, bread, nuts, muesli. These foods are harder to swallow and can help your swallowing muscle to get stronger
- Drink sips of water throughout meals,
- Add extra sauce/gravy to help with dry foods
- Keep track of your weight. If you are continuing to lose weight, please talk to your dietitian

When to ask to see a Speech Pathologist

- If you are having difficulty swallowing
- If you are losing weight without trying
- If you have difficulty speaking clearly, or changes in the sound of your voice due to head and neck cancer and/or treatment side effects

How to get in touch

- Talk to the speech pathologist working in the Cancer Centre. They may already be known to you.
- Talk to your oncologist/surgeon or nurse
- Email the Speech Pathology Department: NSLHD-RNS-SpeechPathology@health.nsw.gov.au
- Call the Speech Pathology Department on 02 9463 1622