

Swallowing Awareness

"You swallow approximately 600 times a day and yet chances are, you never think about this vital act—that is, until something goes wrong.

Feeding and swallowing disorders—also known as **dysphagia** (*dis-fay-juh*)—can affect people of all ages: from newborns to the elderly. It can impact the entire process of managing food, drinks and medications in the mouth and swallowing them safely. Left untreated, swallowing disorders can have devastating physical and emotional consequences, including malnutrition, dehydration, delayed growth and development, pneumonia, social isolation and airway obstruction.

The Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (CASLPA) recognizes the second Wednesday in May as **Swallowing Awareness Day**. Many people have never heard of dysphagia and have no idea that speech-language pathologists are the professionals who assess and treat these disorders. Swallowing Awareness Day is an opportunity to bring attention to swallowing disorders and to connect people with the professionals who can help."

-- from the website <http://maymonth.ca/en/swallowing-awareness-day/>

* In Quebec, Occupational Therapists are often the professionals who treat swallowing disorders.

* In the school setting, we can educate our students about good eating habits such as the importance of taking small bites, chewing thoroughly, staying hydrated during meals, and sitting with good posture when eating.

* We can also be on the lookout for signs and symptoms of dysphagia, including constant coughing or clearing throat, coughing or gagging when eating, resistance to certain foods/drinks/textures, recurring pneumonia, gurgly voice quality, drooling or difficulty with the act of chewing. More information can be found here:

<http://www.asha.org/public/speech/swallowing/feeding-and-swallowing-disorders-in-children/>

* If you are concerned about a swallowing disorder, please contact one of the clinics below:

- Clinique de dysphagie – CMR
http://www.cmrmonteregie.ca/programmes_services/programme_jeunesse_en_deficienc_e_motrice/clinique_de_dysphagie
- Clinique de dysphagie – CRME
<http://www.crme-sainte-justine.org/pages.aspx?IdMenu=1427&IdPage=40370>
- Montreal General Hospital Dysphagia Clinic
<http://muhc.ca/clinic/dysphagia-clinic-mgh-occupational-therapy>
- The Montreal Children's Hospital Pediatric Feeding Program
<http://www.thechildren.com/en/departments/index.aspx?ID=113>