

A GUIDE TO PRESCRIBING THICKENERS FOR ADULTS WITH DYSPHAGIA

Recommendations:

- Ensure the recommendation to prescribe a thickener has come from an appropriately trained healthcare professional e.g. a Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) after a diagnosis of dysphagia has been made.
- Review the patient's record or management plan to ensure it contains clear documented details of the consistency of foods and fluids the patient is able to manage.
- Review quantities prescribed. Too many tins each month can result in stockpiling and waste. Too little can result in patients being put at further risk, or care homes ordering mid-cycle or borrowing from other residents.
- Prescribing thickeners as tins/tubs is more cost effective than prescribing sachets and easier for patients/carers to use. Only the measuring scoop provided with the product should be used to achieve accurate thickening.
- Review the formulation of other medications to ensure they are suitable for the patient. Liquid formulations are not always appropriate for those with dysphagia as they may also require thickening. Consider whether medication can be discontinued or assess if an alternative formulation or route of administration might be more appropriate.
- Consider appropriate safe storage of thickeners. A patient safety alert has been issued by NHS England <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2015/02/psa-fluidfood-thickening-powder/>

Which thickener to prescribe?

- From April 2017 new patients with dysphagia will be started by SLTs at Basildon Hospital on a gum based thickener, Resource® ThickenUp® Clear.
- Gum based thickeners make a clear drink which is more palatable and also safer as it is more stable. Unlike starch based thickeners the gum is not digested by amylase enzyme in saliva.
- Patients who are currently well managed on starch based thickeners e.g. Thicken Aid® need not be switched. However if a SLT recommends a switch to gum based thickener please continue with this and do not switch back to starch based products.

How much to prescribe:

- Based on a fluid intake of 1600mls daily the minimum amount of thickener needed is shown below.
- Please note that more may be required to thicken foods or if a higher fluid intake is taken.
- Please check amount actually used with the patient after one month and adjust the quantity accordingly.

Thickener	Presentation and Price MIMS May 2019	Minimum requirement per month			
		IDDSI level 1 slightly thick	IDDSI level 2 mildly thick	IDDSI level 3 moderately thick	IDDSI level 4 extremely thick
Resource® ThickenUp® Clear	127g tub £8.46	3 tubs	5 tubs	9 tubs	17 tubs
Thicken Aid®	225g tub £3.71	9 tubs	14 tubs	18 tubs	18 tubs

If you have any queries relating to prescribing of thickeners or medications for patients with dysphagia please contact the Medicines Optimisation Team on 01375 365811 or email prescribing.mailbox@nhs.net

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