

## FAQ Category: Pills, capsules, tablets; Choking; Aspiration

**Q:** Although they are not foods, people are also asked to swallow pills, capsules and tablets. What diet levels would include the expectation that a person is able to swallow whole tablets or capsules and for which diet levels would tablets and capsules pose a choking risk?

**A:** The ability to swallow pills or tablets and capsules varies from healthy person to healthy person and is also a concern for choking/aspiration risk for people with swallowing difficulties (Sundar et al., 2001; Carnaby-Mann & Crary 2005; Lau et al., 2015). From a food texture perspective, individuals who are able to safely manage Level 7 - Regular food and Level 6 - Soft & Bite-sized foods *may* be able to manage solid dose medications like tablets and capsules. Some individuals on Level 5 – Minced & Moist *may* also be able to manage oral medications. However, pills, tablets and capsules would be considered a choking risk for people who require Level 4 - Pureed/Extremely Thick. Ability to swallow whole pills, tablets and capsules can be assessed on a case-by-case basis by a dysphagia specialist. In the event that the person is not able to swallow whole pills, tablets or capsules consult the person's Doctor for advice on alternative formulations. Cutting or crushing of medication is NOT recommended, and may have critical adverse effects (Wright, 2002). Always seek advice from a Doctor or Pharmacist before altering medication. Resources are also available for medication management for people with swallowing difficulties (White & Bradnam, 2007; Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia, 2015).

### References:

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This document is to be read in conjunction with the Complete IDDSI Framework, IDDSI Testing Methods and IDDSI Evidence documents (<http://iddsi.org/resources/framework/>).

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