










# Guidance for the use of thickeners

The Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) has recommended that you have thickened fluids. It is important to thicken fluids to the consistency recommended by your SLT to reduce the risk of difficulties with swallowing. These risks include aspiration - when food/drink goes down “the wrong way”. Aspiration may cause coughing, choking and can lead to chest infections.

## Your recommended drink level is :



 <b>EXTREMELY THICK</b>	Cannot be drunk from a cup. Cannot be sucked through a straw. Can be taken from a spoon.		<b>Level 4</b>
 <b>MODERATELY THICK</b>	Can be drunk from a cup. Effort required to drink this through a standard or wide bore straw. Drips slowly in dollops through the prongs of a fork.		<b>Level 3</b>
 <b>MILDLY THICK</b>	Flows off a spoon, but slower than thin drinks. Sippable. Effort required to drink this through a standard bore straw.		<b>Level 2</b>
 <b>SLIGHTLY THICK</b>	Thicker than water. Requires a little more effort to drink than thin liquids. Flows through a straw.		<b>Level 1</b>
 <b>THIN</b>	Flows like water - fast flow. Can drink via any cup/straw as appropriate.		

For your recommended drink level you need to add \_\_\_\_\_ scoops per \_\_\_\_\_ when using \_\_\_\_\_ thickener.

Quantity of thickener required may vary slightly depending on temperature or thickness of liquid – check the tin for more information.

## What needs to be thickened?

All fluids should be thickened to the recommended consistency, including:

- hot and cold drinks
- nutritional supplement drinks
- soups
- fizzy juice
- milk (including milk added to cereal)
- sauces (sweet or savoury)
- liquid medication (follow advice from your pharmacist)



Some soups when blended are already thick, especially if they contain cream or potato. Some items will need to be thickened further to achieve the right consistency – compare soups/sauces/gravy to how thick your drinks are when made following your usual instructions and decide if you need to thicken things further.

You may find some drinks more palatable than others when thickened.

# How do I mix the thickener?

## Using a fork or whisk

- Add the thickener to a small amount of the liquid while mixing with a fork or whisk. Then slowly add the rest of the liquid to ensure a smooth consistency.
- Continue mixing for about 30 seconds and leave the liquid to stand for at least 1 minute to finish the thickening process.
- Pour the liquid into another glass or cup to check the consistency is correct and to remove any residue or lumps.

## Using a shaker

(This method works best for milk based drinks)

- Add the liquid and thickener to the shaker and shake vigorously for 30 seconds.
- Leave the liquid to stand to finish the thickening process.
- Pour into a glass or cup and check the consistency to ensure it is free from lumps before drinking.



## Useful tips

- Make sure that the fork or whisk is dry before use.
- Add all the required powder at once.
- Always measure the liquid you need.
- Some drinks take longer to thicken – milk may take 6-7 minutes to thicken, nutritional supplements may take 12-15 minutes to thicken fully.
- Always use a container large enough to allow mixing without spillage and for fizzy drinks which may “fizz over” on thickening.
- Give the drink a stir before serving to ensure it is still the right consistency and consume within a period of 2 hours.
- Chill drinks and only thicken them before serving, rather than pre-thickening and then storing in a fridge.
- Allow hot drinks to cool slightly before thickening. Add any milk and sugar before thickening.



If you have any questions about thickening fluids or about the swallowing recommendations made by the Speech and Language Therapist please contact your SLT.