

Ice Chips Only

No other food or drinks by mouth for your safety



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER

You have problems swallowing. Based on the testing done by your speech therapist, your doctor has ordered you to only be given ice chips. You are not allowed to have anything else to eat or drink by mouth. You may hear the staff call this being **NPO**. There is too great of a risk of you choking or getting a respiratory infection, like pneumonia, from food or drinks entering your airway, also called **aspiration**. You also may have lost your ability to feel food or drink in your airway. This is called **silent aspiration**.

Ice chips will help:

- Reduce your dry mouth
- Help with your fluid balance
- Allow you to practice swallowing
- Help you to feel more satisfied and comfortable

For your safety, ice chips are the only liquids allowed. Nothing is to be mixed with the ice chips. No liquid food items, such as popsicles, ice cream, and milkshakes are allowed.

Why can I only have ice chips and no other types of liquids?

The small amount of water in ice chips can be quickly absorbed by your lungs. Other types of liquids may be too acidic and harm your lungs if they should enter your airway if you choke and aspirate.

Mouth care

Having a clean mouth reduces the harmful germs that could mix with the water and enter your lungs, which could cause pneumonia. Good mouth care is the best way to prevent pneumonia.

Do mouth care first thing in the morning before having any ice chips, and **at least two times each day**.

Mouth care steps include:

- Brush your teeth, gums, and tongue with a soft toothbrush.
- Rinse your mouth with a mixture of 1 ½ ounces of peroxide mixed with 1 ounce of water, or other rinse as ordered by your doctor.
- Floss your teeth.
- Use lip balm to keep your lips from cracking.

If you have any questions about mouth care, please speak to your nurse or speech therapist.