Your Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) and doctor may want you to thicken liquids for safer swallowing. Some liquids are naturally thick. Other liquids can be made thick with powders or gels.

Thickened liquids can:

- Give you better control of swallowing the liquids in your mouth.
- Reduce the risk of liquids going into your windpipe or trachea, which leads to your lungs and can cause a lung infection.

**Levels of liquid thickness**

You will be told how thick liquids should be for you to swallow safely. This depends on your problem with swallowing, also called *dysphagia*.

- **Thin liquids**: such as water, milk, juice, coffee, tea, Ensure, carbonated drinks, Jell-O, ice cream, sherbet, sorbet and broth-based soups. Thin liquids may be mixtures of solids and liquids, such as soups or cereal with milk. **Slightly thick** is the term used for infant formula and supplements.

- **Mildly thick or nectar-like liquids**: such as fruit nectars, maple syrup, egg nog, tomato juice and cream based soups.

- **Moderately thick or honey thick liquids**: with the thickness of honey.

- **Extremely thick or spoon thick liquids**: with the thickness of pudding.

**Thickening products**

Products are available to thicken liquids without changing the taste. Most can be used with hot and cold liquids. Thickening products are found at your local pharmacy or medical supplier, or can be ordered online. You do not need a prescription. Some products are not kept in stock. Be sure to order in advance to avoid running out.

Product information for some common thickening products is provided below. Visit the product’s website for more information and to find a store near you. Consider the cost, ease of use and availability of the product as you decide what to use.

- **Nestle Resource ThickenUp Clear**, [www.thickenupclear.com](http://www.thickenupclear.com), 1-800-422-2752
  - Product comes as a powder to mix with liquids. Sold in canisters or single serving packets.
  - Pros: Product has a quick mixing time and does not separate over time.
  - Cons: Product reduces carbonation in carbonated beverages and has a longer mixing time if beverage contains protein.
Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

For more health information, contact the Library for Health Information at 614-293-3707 or e-mail health-info@osu.edu.