

The Use of Thickening Agents in Barnsley

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Dysphagia is the term used to describe a range of swallowing difficulties.

Oropharyngeal dysphagia relates to the initial stages of the swallow process & includes chewing and the swallow reflex.

Thickening agents are used to thicken fluids and foods to various consistencies for individuals with oropharyngeal dysphagia.

The risks of oropharyngeal dysphagia include choking, dehydration, poor chest status & weight loss.

Individuals with oropharyngeal dysphagia are assessed by a Speech & Language Therapist in order to establish appropriate consistencies for fluids and food.

From October 29th 2019 Barnsley Area Prescribing Committee supports the use of Thick & Easy Clear as a first line option when a thickener is indicated, across primary and secondary care.

(Prescribing guidelines for Thickeners are on the BEST website)

Why is this change happening?

Thickeners have recently evolved from the original starch-based to a new range of gum based-thickeners.

“Clear gum-based thickeners are the preferred choice as they are the most palatable and safest” (*NHS PrescQipp, Bulletin 100, May 2015*)

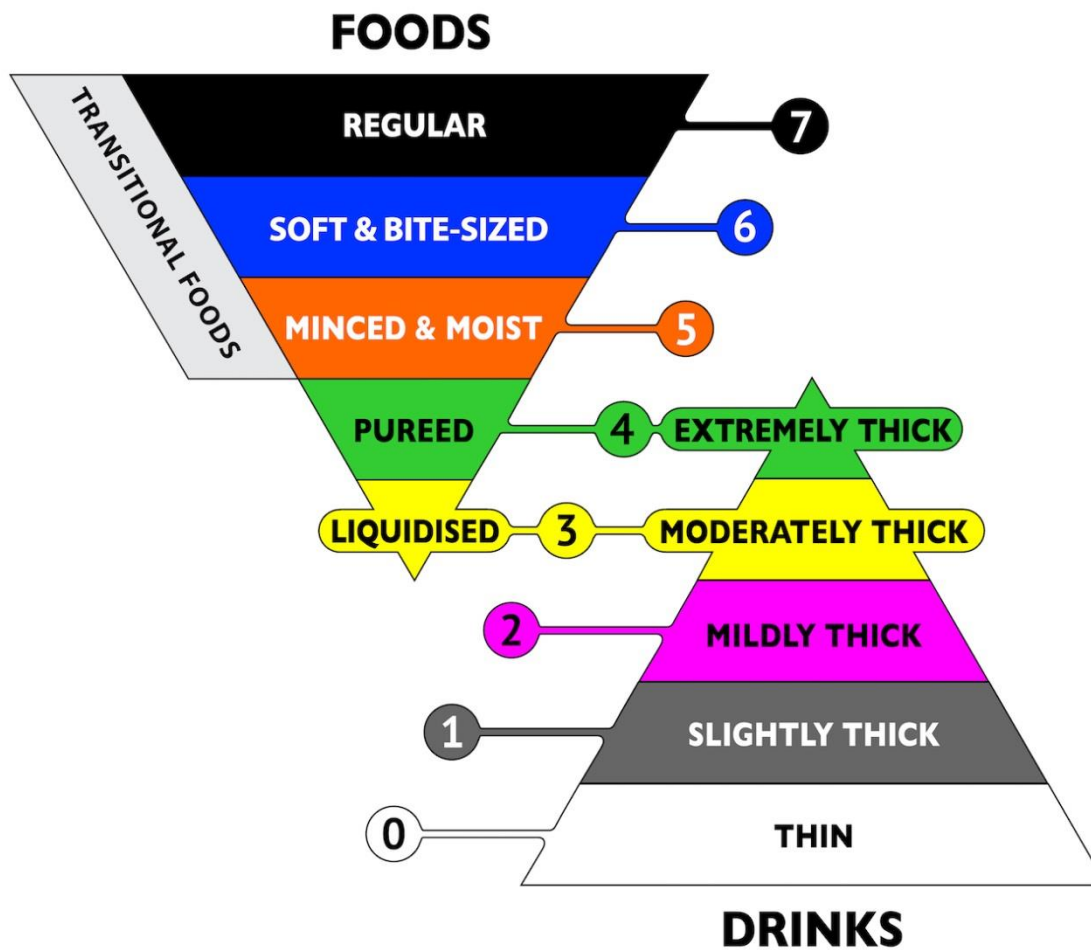
Comparison of gum based vs starch based thickeners

Gum based	Starch based
Not broken down by amylase	Broken down by amylase
Improved stability	Consistency changes over time
Minimal effect of temperature changes, remains close to original consistency when heated or frozen	Affected by temperature changes (can become thicker, thinner or separate)
Does not change visual appearance (water remains clear)	Does change visual appearance (water becomes cloudy)
More palatable due to smoother texture	Less palatable due to grainy texture
No oral residue post swallow	Oral residue post swallow
Add liquid to the powder	Add powder to the liquid

Why now?

To coincide with the launch of the new International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI).

IDDSI is an evidence based framework of new descriptors for food and fluids for worldwide implementation.



IDDSI & Thick & Easy Clear Implementation from 29/10/18:

Thick & Easy Clear is the thickener of choice for new patients.

Speech & Language therapists are using Thick & Easy Clear when a thickener is indicated during swallowing assessments.

Assessments will be done using the IDDSI (for fluids).

Individuals currently on Thick & Easy Regular and other thickeners will remain on these.

Individuals currently on Barnsley Descriptors will remain on these.



Concerns/risks

Different Approaches Used by Manufacturers in Preparation for April 2019 Deadline:

Potential scoop size changes to comply with IDDSI:

Thick & Easy Clear (no change)

Thick & Easy regular 4.5g to 1.5g early 2019

Nutilis Clear (no change)

Nutilis Powder regular (nothing confirmed)

Resource Thicken Up Clear (no change)

Resource Thicken Up Regular (nothing confirmed)

Thicken Aid powder (to be confirmed in Jan 2019)

Labelling to reflect IDDSI : different timings for producing tins with IDDSI labelling, transition labels by some manufacturers (available for Thick & Easy Clear)

Concerns/risks continued:

Implications for care homes if range of thickeners used i.e. gum-based vs starch-based and different size scoops.: *when possible please reiterate that scoops are not to be mixed up and that the thickening method is different.*

Implications for care homes if residents on different descriptors i.e. Barnsley Descriptors vs IDDSI: *residents to remain on Barnsley Descriptors unless reassessed by a Speech & Language therapist.*

Patients to be advised to follow the recommendations from either the Speech & Language therapy department or GP practice regarding the number of scoops required.

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