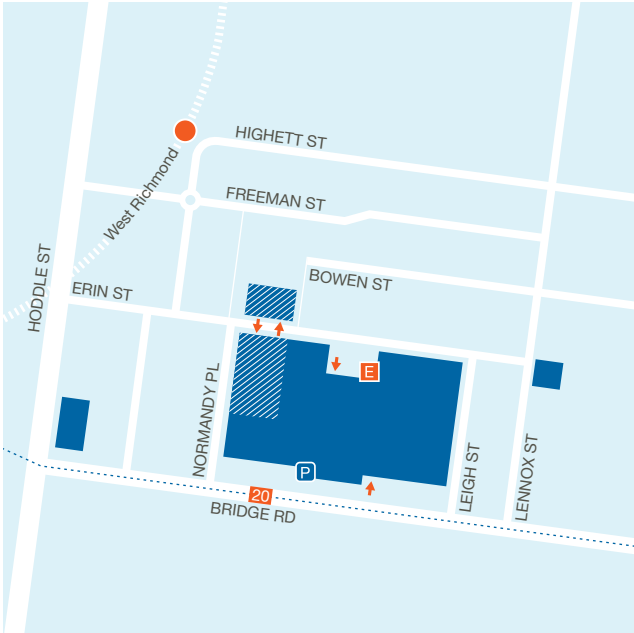


## For more information

Speak to an Epworth Rehabilitation Speech Pathologist at one of the locations below.

### Epworth Rehabilitation Richmond



### Epworth Rehabilitation Brighton



### Epworth Rehabilitation Camberwell



## Epworth Rehabilitation

Excellence. Everywhere. Everyday.

### Rehabilitation Services

Epworth Rehabilitation Richmond  
89 Bridge Road  
Richmond Vic 3121  
Phone 03 9426 8726  
Fax 03 9426 8734

Epworth Rehabilitation Camberwell  
888 Toorak Road  
Camberwell Vic 3124  
Phone 03 9805 4125  
Fax 03 9591 9249

Epworth Rehabilitation Brighton  
85 Wilson Street  
Brighton Vic 3186  
Phone 03 9592 9144  
Fax 03 9593 1276

### Acute Services

Epworth Richmond  
89 Bridge Road  
Richmond Vic 3121  
Phone 03 9426 8726  
Fax 03 9426 8734

Epworth Freemasons  
166 Clarendon Street  
East Melbourne Vic 3002  
Phone 0488 200 447

[www.epworth.org.au](http://www.epworth.org.au)

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# Dysphagia



**This information is for people who are interested in dysphagia.**

**If you have difficulty reading or understanding this information, please ask your Speech Pathologist for assistance.**

## What is dysphagia?

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Dysphagia is the medical term for difficulty with swallowing.

Conditions that can cause dysphagia include:

- Neurological Impairments e.g. stroke, brain tumours, head injury, motor neurone disease, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, dementia
- Cancer e.g. head, neck/throat, mouth, lung
- Surgery to the mouth, neck/throat, spine, head or brain
- Respiratory disease e.g. chronic obstructive airways disease (COAD).

## Effects of dysphagia

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Dysphagia can result in:

- Chest infection
- Dehydration
- Malnutrition
- Choking
- Weight loss
- Hospital readmission.

## Aspiration

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Aspiration is when food or fluid goes down the wrong way into your airway, instead of into your food pipe (oesophagus).

The body's natural reaction to aspiration is to cough and try to clear the food or fluid from the airway.

If swallowing or coughing is weak, or if sensation in the throat has changed, aspiration can occur.

Chest infections may indicate aspiration pneumonia. This is a serious condition when food or fluid has entered the lungs and caused infection.

## Signs of dysphagia

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People with dysphagia may have the following difficulties:

### Oral Stage

- Holding food in the mouth or difficulty chewing solid foods
- Moving food or fluids to the back of the mouth
- Clearing food or fluid in the cheeks or in the mouth after swallowing.

### Throat (Pharyngeal) Stage

- Coughing or choking after swallowing food or fluids
- Wet or 'gurgly' voice after food or fluids
- Food or fluids coming out of the nose
- Shortness of breath after consuming food or fluids.

## Food Pipe (Oesophageal) Stage

- Heartburn
- Reflux.

## Assessing dysphagia

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A Speech Pathologist is a health professional who has specialised training in the assessment and treatment of dysphagia (swallowing impairments).

Swallowing is assessed by looking at the function of the muscles involved in swallowing various foods or fluids. This can be observed at the bedside or with a procedure known as a Videofluoroscopy.

A Videofluoroscopy is a moving video x-ray of the swallowing function. It allows examination of the anatomy and function of the swallowing structures.

A Speech Pathologist may recommend a Videofluoroscopy in order to determine the most effective treatment for dysphagia.

For more information, please ask your Speech Pathologist for a Videofluoroscopy information brochure.

## How is dysphagia treated?

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Treatment of dysphagia is dependent on the specific difficulties the person is experiencing.

Treatment usually has a practical focus, identifying the safest food and fluid consistencies to consume and swallowing techniques to implement.

Treatment may also include the provision of swallowing exercises to improve a person's ability to use the muscles involved in swallowing.