



Coventry & Warwickshire Thickener Guidance

Thickeners are used to thicken fluids for people with dysphagia (swallowing difficulties). Thickening a fluid slows down its transit time through the mouth and throat, this can help people with dysphagia swallow more safely. This helps to prevent food or fluids from entering the lungs to cause serious complications e.g. chest infections, and death due to choking or aspirational pneumonia.

Thickeners should only be prescribed on the recommendation of a Speech and Language Therapist (SALT).

Advice to thicken fluids will depend on the patient's degree of dysphagia, and the desired consistency required.

Which Thickener: **Nutlis Clear is the first choice thickener in Coventry and Warwickshire.** Clear gum-based thickeners are the preferred choice as they are the most palatable and safest.

Speech and Language Therapist (SALT) recommend that all stable patients currently prescribed a thickener can be switched to Nutlis Clear. IDDSI levels should be identified at the point of switch based on the new descriptors.

GP or patient to contact local SALT if experiencing any difficulties with the change of product.

Patients should be advised to read instructions carefully as mixing methods vary between products.

How much thickener to prescribe: All adults should be encouraged to drink at least **1600ml** fluid per day, therefore the amounts of thickener advised below are the minimum quantities required for 28 days to thicken **1600ml** fluid per day to the correct consistency.

Type of Thickener	Thickener	Tin size (g)	Descriptions/Characteristic	No of scoops per 200ml	Approx no of Tins	Cost per month
Gum Based	Nutlis Clear	175	Level 1	1	2	£16.92
			Level 2	2	4	£33.84
			Level 3	3	5	£42.30
			Level 4	7	11	£93.06
Starch Based	Resource Thicken up	227	Stage 1	2	9	£41.94
			Stage 2	3	14	£65.24
			Stage 3	4	18	£83.88

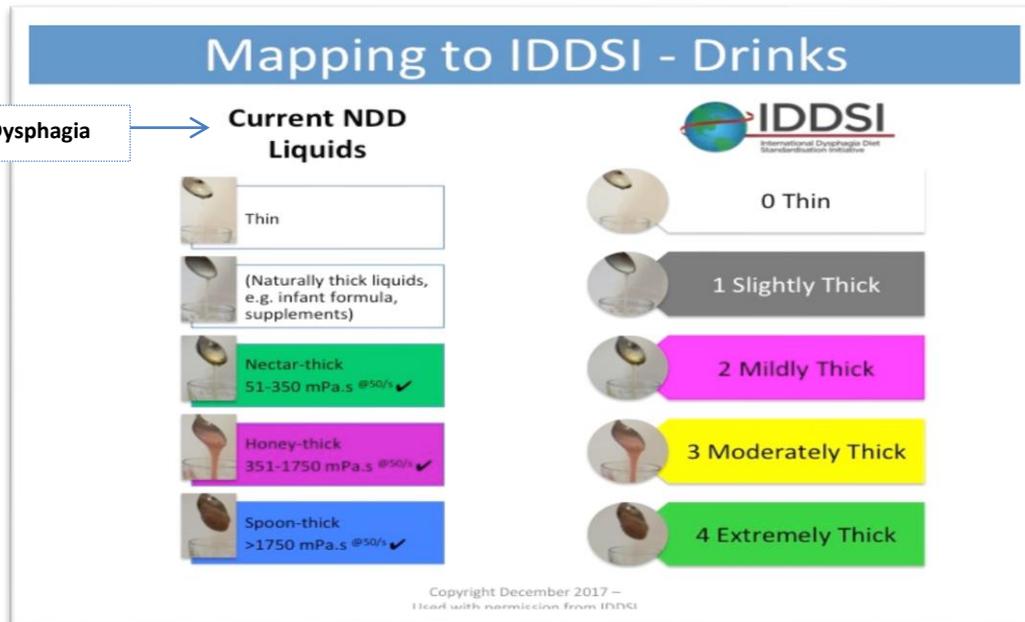
Fluid consistency: The International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI) terminology will be used to describe all thickened fluids. This was founded with the goal of developing new global standardised terminology and definitions to describe texture modified foods and thickened liquids used for individuals with dysphagia – of all ages, in all care settings, and for all cultures. *The following descriptors are included in IDDSI:*

Dysphagia Diet and Food Texture Descriptors
March 2012

normal	This was not used
E fork mashable	Soft, tender, needs some chewing, can be mashed with a fork
D pre-mashed	Soft, tender, needs very little chewing
C thick puree	Smooth no bits or lumps
B thin puree	Does not require chewing Does not hold its shape on a plate

www.iddsi.org

Stage 3	Needs to be taken with a spoon
Stage 2	Leaves a thick coat on the back of a spoon
Stage 1	Leaves a thin coat on the back of a spoon
Naturally thick	Product leaves a coating on an empty glass
thin	Still water



The International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative 2016 - www.iddsi.org.

The amount of thickener required by each patient will vary and is dependent on how much fluid they drink and which consistency is required.

Fluid consistency is recommended by SALT in one of the following ways:

	Descriptions/Characteristics	
Level 1 IDDSI	Slightly thick fluid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thicker than water. • Flows through a straw, syringe, teat /nipple.
Level 2 IDDSI, (previously Stage 1 fluids)	Mildly thick fluid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flows off a spoon. • Sippable, pours quickly from a spoon, but slower than thin drinks
Level 3 IDDSI, (previously Stage 2 fluids)	Moderately thick fluids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will not hold shape its shape on a spoon? • Sippable, pours slowly off a spoon.
Level 4 IDDSI, (previously Stage 3 fluids)	Extremely thick fluids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holds shape on spoon • Flows very slowly under gravity.

Key Recommendations:

- Residents with swallowing difficulties to be assessed by a Speech and Language Therapist.
- Review quantity to avoid waste and over-prescribing.
- Medication should not be disposed of automatically each month, stocks should be carried forward.
- For care homes, use the same thickener for all residents to avoid errors and reduce wastage.
- For gum based thickeners, add the desired quantity of thickener before adding the fluid.
- Thickeners in sachets form **should not** be used and converted to tins.
- There has been a case of death by accidental ingestion of thickening powder by a care home resident. Consider carefully where thickeners are kept to minimise risk to residents.⁽²⁾

References:

1. Prescipp Bulletin 100 Appropriate prescribing of thickeners in dysphagia May 2015
2. NHS England. Patient Safety Alert –Risk of death by asphyxiation after accidental ingestion of thickening powder Feb 2015
3. NHS England. Resources to support safer modification of food and drink April 2018
4. International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative Website <http://iddsi.org/framework/>