



When You Just Can't Swallow It !

A Bruno Byte

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"Choking" on saliva or thin liquids is the most common swallowing complaint in polio survivors. The thin liquid sort of sneaks down your throat, especially when you are sleeping.

This doesn't necessarily show up on a video swallow study since liquid barium is far from thin. For bedtime issues, talk to your doctor about taking a decongestant to dry up saliva.

The good news is that trouble with thin liquids isn't the pre-cursor to problems swallowing other things. The overwhelming majority of polio survivors don't have big-time difficulty swallowing, as do those who have had a stroke or have a neurological disease.

If polio survivors do have trouble swallowing while eating, a video swallow study is the first step to find out if the food is "pooling" in the throat or not going down at all, due to muscle spasm or a narrow esophagus. A speech therapist can teach you tricks to help your swallowing. Liquids can be thickened. Solid food should be cut into small pieces, eaten slowly, chewed thoroughly and swallowed with intention. You can even swallow twice per mouthful.

Also, you shouldn't talk while eating, something difficult for voluble (someone who speaks quickly) polio survivors to do! As the Buddhists teach: PAY ATTENTION! When you eat, only eat. When you speak, only speak.

The Encyclopedia of Polio and Post-Polio Sequelae

contains all of [Dr. Richard Bruno's](#) articles, monographs, commentaries and "Bruno Bytes"

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