

Prescribing Advice: Thickener

Indication: Increase bolus control for fluids to increase swallow safety and reduce aspiration risk.

Caution: GPs should not prescribe thickener without SALT advice. Not suitable for all patients with oropharyngeal dysphagia: Adding thickener to fluids does not always decrease risk of aspiration.

Considerations before prescribing:

- *Has the patient's swallow been assessed by a Speech & Language Therapist (SALT), or has the dysphagia worsened?* ⇒ Please refer. Contact SALT for advice as required.
- *Is the patient on oral nutrition supplements (ONS)?* ⇒ Are these the correct texture? See guidance sheet "Prescribing Advice: ONS for patients requiring thickened fluids" ⇒ Is a dietitian referral required?
- *Is the patient able to thicken their own drinks/do they have someone to help?* ⇒ If not, may consider pre-thickened drinks. e.g. Resource.

Which product?

Resource ThickenUp Clear recommended as first line choice: Preferred for taste, stability of consistency over time, cost, appearance, palatability, clear instructions, and amylase resistance.

Provide second line choice, Thick & Easy, if patient cannot tolerate first line choice, or if SALT recommend.

How much?

Prescribe enough to thicken **ALL** daily fluids.

- 1) Calculate daily fluid requirement: Daily fluid requirement = 35ml/kg (<60years) & 30ml/kg (>60 years).
- 2) What thickness of fluid have SLT recommended?
Level 2 (Mildly thick); Level 3 (Moderately thick); Level 4 (Extremely thick)
- 3) Refer to table below to calculate number of tins to prescribe by recommended fluid thickness per 28 days.

*e.g. 70 year-old 70kg man, recommended Level 2 thickened fluids would require 2100ml per day
⇒ 7 tins Resource Thicken Up Clear per 28 days*

	Thickener brand	Tubs per 28 day supply if patient drinking 1000ml daily	Tubs per 28 day supply if patient drinking 2000ml daily	Cost per 200ml drink ¹
First Line Recommendation (1 scoop = 1.2g approx)	Resource ThickenUp Clear (127g/unit)			
	Level 2 (2 scoops/200ml)	3	6	£0.16
	Level 3 (4 scoops/200ml)	6	11	£0.32
	Level 4 (6 scoops/200ml)	11	22	£0.48
Second Line Recommendation (1 tbsp = 4.5g approx)	Thick & Easy (225g/unit)			
	Level 2 (2 tbsp/200ml)	5	11	£0.21
	Level 3 (3 tbsp/200ml)	9	16	£0.31
	Level 4 (4 tbsp/200ml)	12	22	£0.41

¹Prices based on July 2016 dm+d NHS listing

Further information: National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA) Dysphagia Expert Reference Group (2011). Dysphagia Diet Food Texture Descriptors; Steele et al. (2015) The influence of food texture and liquid consistency modification on swallowing physiology and function: A systematic review. Dysphagia; 30(1): 2-26; NHS PresQIPP (May 2015) Bulletin 100: Appropriate prescribing of thickeners for dysphagia in adults..

Guidance prepared by a Working Group of NELFT Speech and Language Therapists (SALT) & Dietitians based on a review of thickeners on the market.

Contact Details - Community Adult Speech & Language Therapy (SLT) Teams:

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