



Aspiration Pneumonia (Low Risk)

Pneumonia is a breathing condition in which there is swelling or an infection of the lungs or large airways. **Aspiration pneumonia** occurs when food, saliva, liquids, or vomit is breathed into the lungs or airways leading to the lungs, instead of being swallowed into the esophagus and stomach. Individuals, who are mobile, alert, and who eat and drink independently and safely are at a **Low Risk** for developing aspiration pneumonia.

Risk factors for breathing in of foreign material into the lungs (aspiration) include but are not limited to:

- Being less alert due to medicines, illness, or other reasons such as coma
- Problems with swallowing, gagging, coughing, choking or vomiting after eating/drinking
- Eating very fast or placing large amounts of food in the mouth
- Age greater than 45 for individuals with DD
- Continuous feedings tube feeding

Some symptoms of aspiration pneumonia may include but are not limited to:

- shortness of breath
- fever or low body temperature
- wheezing
- cough, choking or gagging with oral intake

Outcomes associated with Aspiration Pneumonia include but are not limited to:

- Chronic breathing problems
- Poor oxygen exchange causing damage to heart, brain, and other organs
- Abscess, infection of extra fluid in the lungs
- Death

Recommendations: Awareness of risk is important. Be alert to symptoms of changes in a person's health status and seek guidance from a health professional. If individual is hospitalized, consider re-evaluating risk.

References

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Please note: this information is not intended to replace the advice of a doctor or NP. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health providers with any questions about your medical condition.