



MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday 1 May 2019

Australia adopts international guidelines for swallowing safety

Today, **1 May 2019**, marks the official adoption of the International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI) in Australia.

Supported by the Dietitians Association of Australia, Speech Pathology Australia and the Institute of Hospitality in HealthCare, the IDDSI framework outlines standardised names and descriptions of food and drink used in medical and community settings to reduce choking risk.

Swallowing is a reflex essential to everyday life, and a key factor to the safe consumption of food and drink. However, for the 8% of the population who experience difficulty with swallowing (dysphagia), meal times can bring with them added stress and risk. Modifying the texture of food and drinks helps to reduce anxiety and health risks such as choking for patients. This in turn can increase consumption of the meal, to allow adequate intake of nutrition and hydration to support recovery and maintain health.

“The sad reality is that one of the most common factors in choking deaths is a lack of clear, consistent terminology so that what I describe as ‘soft’ or ‘thick’ is the same as what you describe as ‘soft’ or ‘thick,’” IDDSI Australia Project Officer, Dr Julie Cichero said.

“The texture of food and drink is important for those with swallowing difficulties to be able to consume enough to maintain their nutrition, without compromising safety by risking food and drinks entering their airway. It’s critical that the right food and drink textures are provided to meet each person’s individual needs. This is where IDDSI plays a key role.”

The IDDSI framework includes easily accessible testing methods that allow consumers, health professionals, nursing homes and hospitals to check that the food or drink they are serving is correct for Australians with swallowing difficulties.

For manufacturers of texture modified drinks and food specially prepared to reduce choking risk, the IDDSI framework provides standardised labelling for packaging, including standardised colour and number codes, which can be used and recognised around the globe.

Accredited Practising Dietitians, Speech Pathologists and foodservice professionals, play a key role in supporting Australians experiencing dysphagia.



“In aged care, the introduction of a standardised framework ensures clear communication of care for all involved, from health professionals to foodservice staff, to the resident and carer. In turn this further prioritises resident safety,” said Anne Schneyder, APD.

“The focus on texture modified foods will also raise awareness of the importance of presenting food in a positive manner to ensure that it both looks good and tastes good.”

Commencing discussions about the IDDSI framework in 2016, Australia now joins more than 18 countries across the globe who have, or are in the process of, adopting the initiative.

International standardisation of terminology for texture modified diets, will also benefit dysphagia research. Increased consistency in the terminology used to describe a diet type, increases the comparability of findings from across the globe, helping to build a stronger evidence base regarding treatment of dysphagia.

“IDDSI will help to make a real-world difference, both now and in the future, for those experiencing swallowing difficulties,” said Dr Cichero.

For more information about IDDSI, visit: <https://iddsi.org/>

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Media contact:

To organise an interview, contact Pattie King, Dietitians Association of Australia, on 0409 661 920

About the organisations:

[Speech Pathology Australia](#) is the national peak body representing more than 9,000 speech pathologists. The Association supports and regulates the ethical, clinical and professional standards of its members, as well as lobbying and advocating for access to services that benefit people with communication and swallowing difficulties.

The [Dietitians Association of Australia](#) is Australia's largest and most influential organisation for dietetic and nutrition professionals, representing a growing membership of 7,000 across Australia and overseas. Our mission is to support our members and advocate for important issues that impact the health of the Australian community, such as obesity, disability and mental health.

The [Institute of Hospitality in HealthCare](#) (IHHC) is an organisation dedicated to enhancing the professionalism and quality of support services in the Health and Aged Care Industry. The IHHC offers its expertise to a variety of organisations and is directly involved in formulating guidelines and recommendations affecting the Industry. We provide service excellence in support services to our patients, residents and clients.