

Jewish Hospital & St. Mary's HealthCare

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The Frazier Rehab Institute Water Protocol

KATHY PANTHER, M.S., CCC
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

After several years of a conventional dysphagia program, Frazier's swallowing management protocol changed dramatically. Concern over patient and family non-compliance with thin liquid restrictions both within the facility and after discharge led us to alter our protocol in 1984. Previously prohibited, oral intake of water became a major feature in both treatment and day to day hydration. Features of Frazier's program include the points listed below:

Safety of Water

- The human **body is about 60% water**. Small amounts of water taken into the lungs are quickly absorbed into the body pool. (Discussion initiated by program's pulmonologist.)
- Unlike other liquids, water has a **neutral pH**.
- Water provides a safe means of assessing patients with thin liquids. All patients (of any diagnosis) referred to Speech Pathology are screened for dysphagia with water sips.
- Water is safely utilized in daily treatment of thin liquid restricted patients. Unlike in a conventional program, **swallow compensations** can be **practiced with thin liquid**.
- Drinking water during swallowing therapy allows **ongoing assessment** of swallow improvement and permits better recognition of patient readiness for repeated videofluoroscopy or endoscopy and diet advancement.

Hydration

- Free water consumption is **encouraged for all patients** and makes a significant contribution in hydration for many.
- The **risk and cost of IV fluids should be decreased**.
- Post-discharge surveys of Frazier dysphagic patients indicate **water often is the primary means of hydration**.

Compliance

- Complaints of thirst were frequently voiced prior to 1984. Patients reported **thickened liquids did not quench thirst**. Water eliminates thirst and patient **complaints** are now much **less frequent**.
- **Many patients and families object to thickened** liquids. Since water is an option, patients appear more likely to comply with the thin liquids restriction.
- Once home, preparation of thickened liquids often becomes **burdensome**. After days or weeks at home the family may tire of patient complaints and abandon thickened liquids.
- Availability and **cost** of thickening agents and/or prepackaged thick liquids may preclude patient compliance.
- Thick liquid preparation, in addition to other time and energy consuming patient care tasks, can **overwhelm many families**.

THE FRAZIER REHAB INSTITUTE WATER PROTOCOL

WATER BETWEEN MEALS

BY POLICY, ANY PATIENT NPO OR ON A DYSPHAGIC DIET MAY HAVE WATER.

- All patients are **screened with water**. Patients exhibiting **impulsivity or excessive coughing and discomfort will be restricted to water** taken under **supervision**. Patients with **extreme choking** may **not** be permitted oral intake of water due to the physical stress of coughing.
- For patients **on oral diets, water is permitted between meals**. Water intake is unrestricted **prior to a meal and allowed 30 minutes after** a meal. The period of time following the meal allows spontaneous swallows to clear pooled residues.
- After the screening described above, **NPO patients are often permitted water**.
- Patients who are **thin liquid restricted wear yellow wristbands** to communicate the liquid restrictions to all staff. Typically, the band reads, **"No thin liquids except water between meals."** The wording on the band is individualized as appropriate when specific compensations are recommended. For example, a band may read "No thin liquids except water by teaspoon between meals." All rehab staff are oriented to the yellow bands and check for bands before offering liquids to patients.
- Water is **freely offered to patients** according to the guidelines documented on the yellow bands throughout the day.
- Patients for whom **compensations**, i.e. chin tuck, head turn, etc., have proven to be successful are **encouraged** to use compensations while drinking water. This information is also included on the yellow bands.
- Aggressive **oral care** should be provided to those patients who are unable to clean their own teeth and mouths so that pathogenic bacteria are less likely to contaminate secretions.
- **Medications are never given with water**. Pills are given in a spoonful of applesauce, pudding, yogurt, or thickened liquid.
- **Family education** includes emphasis on the rationale for allowing water intake. The Speech-Language Pathologist, Dietician, and Nurse repeat the guidelines for water intake during the education process. Written material is provided as well. Education is **documented** in the medical record.

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