

What Is the International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative?



IN 2012, THE INTERNATIONAL Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI) was launched to develop international standardized terminology and definitions for texture-modified foods and liquids for individuals with dysphagia.¹ The IDDSI includes a diverse group of professional experts involved with dysphagia patients, including nutrition and dietetics, medical, speech pathology, occupational therapy, nursing, patient safety, food science, and technology from around the world.

Conservative estimates suggest that dysphagia affects approximately 8% of the world's population.^{1,2} Dysphagia is associated with malnutrition, dehydration, chest infection, and, potentially, death. Although dysphagia touches individuals across their life span, it is most insidious at either end of life, with infants or elderly people being frequently affected.¹

Modification of food texture and liquid thickness is a cornerstone of dysphagia management.¹ A lack of standardized nomenclature regarding food texture and drink thickness is a major barrier to research in the dysphagia field. Use of a term such as “nectar-thick” in research conducted in the United States may not translate to products or liquid consistencies used in other countries such as the United Kingdom, Japan, or Australia, regardless of the fact that each has a set of National Descriptors guidelines.^{1,2} Without agreement on a single standardized terminology, clinical research and development of therapies is impeded.

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KEY ELEMENTS OF THE IDDSI FRAMEWORK

The IDDSI identifies several key elements of their framework³:

- The final international framework consists of eight levels (0 to 7) and includes both foods and liquids on a single continuum.
- Levels are identified by numbers, text labels, and color codes to facilitate uptake in a variety of settings. Detailed descriptors are provided.
- The IDDSI Flow Test and Fork Test are practical, objective tests of consistency that can be used to distinguish between levels.
- Level 3 includes moderately thick liquids and liquidized foods, which share similar flow characteristics.
- Level 4 includes extremely thick liquids and puréed foods, which share similar flow characteristics.
- A category for transitional foods is provided.
- It is not expected that all levels will be offered in every setting. For example, level 1 (slightly thick liquids) will have particular utility in pediatric settings. Although this level may also prove suitable for other patient/client groups, it may not be offered in all health-care facilities.⁴

The IDDSI framework and detailed description of the eight different levels can be viewed at <http://iddsi.org/>.

Implementation will involve a number of phases, including building awareness, preparation and adoption, and monitoring across all phrases. This past fall the Academy hosted an IDDSI webinar to help members become aware of this initiative.⁵ Peter Lam and Julie Cichero, the co-chairs of the IDDSI, were the speakers. In January 2017, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association announced their support of this new global initiative to

standardize diets for the treatment of people who suffer from swallowing disorders.⁶

The ultimate objective of the initiative is to pursue a patient-safety-oriented innovation in practice, based on consideration of research evidence, current practice, and stakeholder feedback.² The registered dietitian nutritionist is an important part of the health-care team and should collaborate with the speech therapist and other health professionals to ensure appropriate nutrition intervention for patients with dysphagia.

References

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