

TROUBLE SWALLOWING PILLS? **CRUSH** OR NOT TO CRUSH?

UNDERSTANDING PILL DYSPHAGIA



PILL SWALLOWING

difficulty is common and often misunderstood. The body is designed to chew food first—pills are dry and can feel unnatural to swallow. Pill swallowing difficulty is a form of dysphagia and should be evaluated when persistent.

SAFETY RISKS

Crushing or mixing medications can change how they are absorbed, reduce effectiveness, or cause unintended side effects or even overdose. Some medications should **never** be crushed.

BEFORE CRUSHING

Do NOT crush without checking first

- Request liquid or alternative forms if needed
- Use water when possible
- Consult a speech therapist or pharmacist

KEY SIGNS

- Coughing or choking
- Holding pills in the mouth
- Refusing medications
- Needing pills crushed



Up to 40% of adults have trouble swallowing medications—and in nursing facilities, it can be as high as 80%.

WHEN TO REFER TO SPEECH THERAPY

- Difficulty swallowing
- Medications frequently crushed
- Feeling of solids getting “stuck”
- Holding or pocketing pills, food, or liquid
- Recurrent coughing with medications or meals

SAST provides diagnostic swallowing evaluations

