**Liquid Consistency**

**What does liquid consistency mean?**
It refers to thickness of a liquid. Liquids that are thickened may be called nectar thick or honey thick. Please refer to the table below to learn about the different liquids.

**Why does it matter how thick or thin the liquids I have are?**
You may not be able to swallow thin liquids safely. Drinking a liquid that is thicker may help prevent fluid from entering your lungs (also known as aspiration).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Liquids</th>
<th>Safe Liquids</th>
<th>Liquids to Avoid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thin Liquids</td>
<td>Water, all juices, broth, milk, coffee, tea, cocoa, carbonated drinks, alcoholic drinks, gelatin, frozen desserts, nutritional supplements, ice chips, soups.</td>
<td>None unless you are told something else.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nectar-like Liquids</td>
<td>All liquid that is nectar-like. Tip: Make soups smooth by putting through a blender and whisk in mashed potatoes as needed to make nectar thick.</td>
<td>Any liquid that has not been thickened, gelatin, milkshakes, and frozen desserts. Avoid juices that separate such as, pineapple juice, tomato juice, apricot nectar, orange juice that has pulp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honey-like Liquids</td>
<td>All liquid that is honey-like. Tip: Make soups smooth by putting through a blender and whisk in mashed potatoes as needed to make honey thick.</td>
<td>Any liquid that has not been thickened, gelatin, milkshakes, and frozen desserts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Liquids</td>
<td>No Liquids allowed</td>
<td>Water, all juices, broth, milk, coffee, tea, cocoa, carbonated drinks, alcoholic drinks, gelatin, frozen desserts, nutritional supplements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Basic tips for people needing thickened liquids.**
- Your Speech Pathologist can work with you on the correct way to thicken your liquids.
- Do not eat anything that melts.
- Do not add ice cubes to thickened liquids.
- You may need to avoid juicy foods such as watermelon, apples and oranges.
- Drain the juice off of canned fruits.
- Hot drinks that have been thickened tend to become thicker as they cool.
- If you mix a drink in advance and let it sit for a long period of time it will continue to thicken.
- You can buy commercial thickeners at the drug store or order online.
- You can buy pre-thickened juices and milk.
- Soups may be pureed in a blender or strained to remove chunks or lumps then thickened with flour, cornstarch, potato flakes, or commercial thickeners to appropriate consistency.
**Teach Back:**
What is the most important thing you learned from this handout?

What changes will you make in your diet/lifestyle, based on what you learned today?

If you are a UW Health patient and have more questions please contact UW Health at one of the phone numbers listed below. You can also visit our website at www.uwhealth.org/nutrition

Nutrition clinics for UW Hospital and Clinics (UWHC) and American Family Children’s Hospital (AFCH) can be reached at: (608) 890-5500.

Nutrition clinics for UW Medical Foundation (UWMF) can be reached at: (608) 287-2770

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person’s health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 4/2017 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Clinical Nutrition Services Department and the Department of Nursing. HF#468