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FREE PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE

Understanding the IDDSI Framework

A Quick Reference Guide for Care Staff

Knowledge Hub Resource 002

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About This Resource

Understanding the IDDSI Framework®

A Quick Reference Guide for Care Staff

Supporting Safer Eating and Drinking Through Awareness

The International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI) Framework provides a globally recognised system for describing food textures and drink thickness levels for people with swallowing difficulties (dysphagia).

This quick reference guide has been developed by **FlexiLearnHub** to help care staff, catering teams and healthcare professionals understand the purpose of the IDDSI Framework and why it plays such an important role in promoting safer eating and drinking.

This guide is intended to support awareness and should be used alongside your organisation's policies, care plans and guidance from Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) and other appropriately qualified healthcare professionals.

Purpose of this Resource

This guide has been designed to help readers:

- ✓ Understand what the IDDSI Framework is
- ✓ Recognise why texture-modified foods and drinks are important
- ✓ Promote safer mealtime practices
- ✓ Increase awareness of dysphagia
- ✓ Support person-centred care

Suitable For

- Care Assistants
- Senior Carers
- Nurses
- Care Home Managers
- Catering Teams
- Kitchen Staff
- Support Workers
- Family Carers

Important Information

This guide provides general awareness information only. It does not replace practical training, clinical assessment or guidance from Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) or other appropriately qualified healthcare professionals. Always follow individual care plans and your organisation's policies and procedures.

Understanding the IDDSI Framework

What is the IDDSI Framework?

The **International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI) Framework** is a globally recognised system used to describe food textures and drink thickness levels for people living with swallowing difficulties (dysphagia).

Introduced to improve consistency and safety, the framework helps healthcare professionals, care providers and catering teams communicate clearly about the food and drinks an individual can safely consume.

The framework uses **eight clearly defined levels (0–7)** to classify drinks and foods based on their texture and consistency.

Why Was the IDDSI Framework Developed?

Before the IDDSI Framework was introduced, different organisations and countries often used different terminology to describe texture-modified foods and thickened drinks. This inconsistency had the potential to cause confusion and increase the risk of unsafe mealtimes.

The IDDSI Framework provides a common international language that supports safer communication between care staff, catering teams, healthcare professionals and families.

Who Uses the IDDSI Framework?

The framework may be used by:

- Care home staff
- Nurses
- Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs)
- Dietitians
- Catering teams and chefs
- Hospitals
- Community care providers
- Family carers supporting individuals at home

Why It Matters

Using the correct IDDSI level helps support safer eating and drinking for individuals who have been assessed as requiring texture-modified foods or thickened drinks.

Following an individual's care plan and professional guidance helps reduce the risk of swallowing difficulties being managed incorrectly and promotes safer, more dignified mealtimes.

Important Reminder

Never change an individual's food texture or drink consistency without following their care plan or guidance from an appropriately qualified healthcare professional.

Understanding the Eight IDDSI Levels

The IDDSI Framework uses eight internationally recognised levels (0–7) to describe drink thickness and food texture.

Each level has been developed to support safer eating and drinking for individuals who have been assessed as requiring texture-modified foods or thickened drinks.

Always follow the individual's care plan and guidance from appropriately qualified healthcare professionals.

IDDSI Levels – At a Glance

Level	Description
Level 0	Thin drinks
Level 1	Slightly Thick drinks
Level 2	Mildly Thick drinks
Level 3	Moderately Thick drinks / Liquidised foods
Level 4	Extremely Thick drinks / Pureed foods
Level 5	Minced & Moist foods
Level 6	Soft & Bite-Sized foods
Level 7	Regular / Easy to Chew foods (where appropriate)



Important Reminder

The IDDSI level prescribed for an individual should always be followed exactly as detailed within their care plan.

Never assume a different texture or consistency is suitable without appropriate professional assessment and guidance.

Good Practice

- ✓ Always read the individual's care plan before serving meals or drinks.
 - ✓ If you are unsure, ask a senior member of staff.
 - ✓ Report any concerns about swallowing promptly.
 - ✓ Never modify food or drink textures unless authorised and trained to do so.
 - ✓ Follow your organisation's policies and procedures at all times.
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Further Learning

This guide provides an overview of the IDDSI Framework.

For a more detailed understanding of dysphagia awareness, safe mealtime practices and the IDDSI Framework, explore the FlexiLearnHub CPD-accredited training course.

Safe Mealtime Good Practice

Supporting Safe Eating and Drinking

Providing safe mealtime support is an important part of person-centred care. Every individual should receive food and drinks that match their assessed needs and documented care plan.

By following safe mealtime practices, care staff can help promote dignity, comfort and a positive dining experience while reducing the risk of avoidable incidents.

Before Serving Food or Drinks

Always:

- ✓ Check the individual's care plan.
 - ✓ Confirm the correct IDDSI level has been prescribed.
 - ✓ Ensure the meal or drink provided matches the documented requirements.
 - ✓ Wash your hands and follow good food hygiene practices.
 - ✓ Report any concerns before serving the meal.
-

During Mealtimes

Good practice includes:

- ✓ Supporting the individual in accordance with their care plan.
 - ✓ Encouraging a calm, comfortable dining environment.
 - ✓ Observing for any signs of difficulty swallowing.
 - ✓ Allowing adequate time for eating and drinking.
 - ✓ Respecting the individual's dignity and independence wherever possible.
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After Mealtimes

Remember to:

- ✓ Report any concerns promptly.
 - ✓ Record information in line with your organisation's procedures where required.
 - ✓ Share any changes in eating or drinking with the appropriate senior staff member.
 - ✓ Continue to follow the individual's current care plan unless professionally updated.
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Remember

Never change an individual's food texture or drink consistency without appropriate authorisation and documented guidance.

If you are concerned about an individual's swallowing, report your concerns promptly in accordance with your organisation's procedures.

Key Message

Safe eating and drinking is a team responsibility involving care staff, catering teams, nurses, Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs), dietitians, managers, individuals receiving care and, where appropriate, their families.

Working together helps support safer, more enjoyable and person-centred mealtimes.

Continue Your Learning

Building Knowledge Through Ongoing Learning

Understanding the IDDSI Framework is an important first step in supporting individuals with dysphagia and promoting safer eating and drinking.

However, awareness alone does not replace structured training, practical experience or guidance from appropriately qualified healthcare professionals.

Continuing your professional development helps build confidence, supports safer practice and contributes to high-quality, person-centred care.

Learning doesn't stop after induction. Ongoing training helps employees build confidence, maintain professional standards and continue developing the knowledge and skills needed to provide safe, effective and compassionate care.

FlexiLearnHub offers a growing library of professional online training courses and free workplace resources designed to support care, catering and hospitality professionals throughout their careers. Dysphagia Awareness Training within the IDDSI Framework Here at www.flexilearnhub.com

Recommended Training

Consider expanding your knowledge with courses including:

- ✓ Dementia Awareness
- ✓ Safeguarding Adults
- ✓ Infection Prevention & Control
- ✓ Health & Safety in Care
- ✓ End of Life Care Awareness
- ✓ Moving & Handling Awareness
- ✓ Nutrition & Hydration
- ✓ Food Safety & Hygiene Level 2
- ✓ HACCP Level 2
- ✓ **Dysphagia Awareness & the IDDSI Framework**

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- Awareness guides
- Professional advice sheets
- Training articles
- Downloadable resources

About FlexiLearnHub

FlexiLearnHub provides professional online learning, downloadable workplace resources and CPD-accredited training to support organisations and individuals working within the care, catering and hospitality sectors.

Our mission is to make professional learning accessible, practical and affordable while helping employers promote safer working practices, workplace compliance and continuous professional development.

Visit Us Online www.flexilearnhub.com



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