## Guidance for Use and Storage of Thickening Agent

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**Process: Use and Storage of Thickening Agent**

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|  | Risks identified with performing this SOP | Countermeasure |
| 1 | **Daily establishments** | Follow this Guidance |
| 2 | **Bank/agency/new starters to centre** | Follow this Guidance |

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| The purpose of this Guidance is to provide a structured guide for the individual who is responsible for the administration and safe storage of thickening agent. The Guidance is relevant to all RDaSH clinical areas where drinks are provided i.e. inpatient wards, Evergreen Day Services. |
| List of people who may be involved in this Guidance: Nursing staff, therapy staff, service staff, visitors, patients |
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| **Instruction** | **Responsible** |
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| Thickening agent should be stored in the ward kitchen, practice kitchen, on the drinks trolley or patient’s bedside lockers. Whilst being stored it should be out of reach of patients unless they have been assessed as able to thicken their own drinks. | All staff |
| After thickening a patient’s drink return the thickening agent to the ward kitchen, practice kitchen, drinks trolley or patient’s bedside locker as per risk assessment. | All staff |
| After opening, thickening agent should be used within 2 months and should be labelled with the date opened and the date it should be used by. | All staff |
| A Speech and Language Therapist (SALT) or dysphagia qualified practitioner should assess if a patient is competent to thicken their own drinks. This decision should be documented in the patient’s care plan and on the sign above their bed. | SALT or Dysphagia trained practitioner. |
| All patients should be made aware of the risks of consuming thickening agent if not added to drinks. A patient must be assessed ascompetent to thicken their own drinks prior to self-management. This should be documented in their care plan.  The patient should be made aware of the risk to other patients if thickening agent is left within reach of other patients. | SALT, Nurse, Dysphagia Trained Practitioner, Ward Manager. |
| All staff need to be aware of the NHS England National Safety Alert relating to ingestion of thickening powder and be aware of the risks of consuming thickening agent if not mixed with a drink <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2015/02/06/psa-fluidfood-thickening-powder/> | All staff |
| Ensure the current SALT recommendations for fluid consistency are in place and up to date prior to use of thickening agent for any patient.  Refer to SALT entry in electric notes system for guidance regarding consistency and quantity of fluid. Refer to instructions on thickening agent tin regarding how to thicken drinks to recommended consistency.  Patients admitted to the ward/day setting who are already using thickener, should continue to follow their current recommendations for thickening fluids unless new concerns arise, in which case follow SALT referral processes. | Trained staff |

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