

# Having a videofluoroscopy to assess your swallowing

**This leaflet explains more about having a videofluoroscopy to assess your swallowing, including the benefits, risks and any alternatives. It also provides information on what you can expect when you come to hospital.**

**If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.**

## What is a videofluoroscopy?

A videofluoroscopy (VFS) uses video to record an x-ray examination of your swallowing in detail. You will be asked to chew and swallow different varieties of foods and drinks according to your identified difficulties, and this will be recorded on video during the procedure to allow us to examine what occurred.

The study allows us to see how you are currently managing with chewing and swallowing, and whether food or drink gets stuck in your mouth or throat or goes down the wrong way (aspiration).

## What are the benefits of having a videofluoroscopy?

The videofluoroscopy allows your speech and language therapist to see what happens when you swallow. We may then be able to recommend things you can do to improve your swallowing, such as exercises, different positions to eat or drink in, or different types of food or drink that will make swallowing safer or easier.

## What are the risks?

During the videofluoroscopy, there is a risk that some material may go down the wrong way. All care will be taken to minimise this risk and the amount of material that may potentially go down the wrong way. We will also take care to minimise the amount of x-ray radiation you are exposed to. The use of 'contrast' (a special liquid which shows up on x-ray) during the procedure is not usually associated with any problems, but please let us know if you feel unwell during or after the examination.

## Are there any alternatives?

There is no other assessment which offers this amount of detailed information about your swallowing and helps your speech and language therapist to treat your symptoms.

## Giving my consent (permission)

We want to involve you in decisions about your care and treatment. If you decide to go ahead, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This states that you agree to have the treatment and you understand what it involves.

If you would like more information about our consent process, please speak to a member of staff caring for you.

## Where will my videofluoroscopy take place?

In the x-ray department at either St Thomas' Hospital or Guy's Hospital. You will be given directions by your speech and language therapist.

## Who will be present?

The speech and language therapist will lead the assessment with a radiologist and radiographer present.

## How do I prepare for the videofluoroscopy?

You can continue your normal activities. If you are already eating and drinking, you can continue to do so. If you are fed through a tube, this can continue as normal.

## What happens during a videofluoroscopy?

- The assessment takes about 20 minutes.
- You will be asked to sit or stand by the x-ray machine. One part of the machine may move around by your head and neck when you swallow to achieve the best view.
- The speech and language therapist will ask you to take small amounts of drink and food as appropriate (please note there will be different tastes). The food or drink is mixed with 'contrast' which shows up on x-ray.
- The speech and language therapist and radiologist will assess the effectiveness and safety of your swallow.
- You may be asked to try a different position or strategy to make your swallow safer or more efficient. You should not experience any pain.
- Each swallow is recorded so that it can be reviewed later to help develop your treatment plan.

## What happens after the procedure?

- At the end the speech and language therapist will go through the results of the assessment and discuss what will happen next. Please let us know if you want any more information or if you have any concerns.
- The speech and language therapist will then write a report which will be sent to your GP or put in your medical notes if you are in hospital. He/she will also discuss the findings with your medical team.
- You will then be able to go home or back to your ward and can resume your normal activities.
- The recording of the assessment will be kept by the Speech and Language Therapy Department. It may be used for teaching purposes but your name and any identifying details will be removed. Please let us know if you do not want this to happen.

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about having a videofluoroscopy to check your swallowing, please contact the Speech and Language Therapy Department (Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm):

**St Thomas' Hospital** on **020 7188 7798**

**Guy's Hospital** on **020 7188 6233**

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets)

## Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

**t:** 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

## Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

**t:** 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

**t:** 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk)

## Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

**t:** 020 7188 8815 **e:** [languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk)

## NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

**t:** 111

## NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

**w:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

## Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, and to become a member:

**t:** 0800 731 0319 **e:** [members@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:members@gstt.nhs.uk) **w:** [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership)

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