

## Videofluoroscopy assessment to assess swallowing. Patient information leaflet

Radiology department

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### Introduction

We hope this guide will answer your questions about your videofluoroscopy assessment to assess your swallowing and what to expect at your appointment. Please contact the team if you require further information via the details at the end of this leaflet.

### What is a videofluoroscopy assessment?

A videofluoroscopy is an X-ray examination of your swallowing; it is used to look at how you swallow and aims to find out what difficulties you are having with your swallowing.

We do this by using an X-ray video, while you will be asked to chew and swallow different sorts of foods and drinks, depending on your swallowing difficulties. The x-ray produces a moving image of the inside of your mouth and throat as you are eating and drinking, which allows the speech and language therapist (SLT) to see exactly what is happening as you swallow and identify any difficulties you are having.

### What are the alternatives?

Currently, there is no alternative assessment that offers a comprehensive and detailed analysis of your swallowing. This procedure supports your speech and language therapist to tailor a care plan for you, to treat your symptoms.

### Why do I need a videofluoroscopy assessment?

Your referring doctor should have explained the reason why you need this test.

It will help your SLT to decide on the cause of your symptoms, giving clearer information to the specialists treating you.

There are several benefits of a videofluoroscopy, this includes:

- Allowing your speech and language therapist to establish in more detail what is happening when you swallow
- Understanding whether any food or drink gets stuck in your mouth or throat or if it is swallowed down in the wrong way

We can provide recommendations to improve your swallowing, including exercises, different positions to eat or drink in, or different types of food or drink to make swallowing easier, for example exercises or modification of food or drink textures to make them easier to swallow.

## Are there any risks?

There is a risk that some of the food or drink could enter the airway, due to your current swallowing difficulties, however we will take all necessary precautions to minimise this risk for you.

**X-ray radiation:** All X-ray procedures involve exposure to radiation in varying amounts. The dose you get from a medical X-ray is very low, and your doctor has determined that the benefits of having the examination outweigh potential risks. The radiographer is present throughout your test, making sure that the dose is kept as low as reasonably possible and the duration and level of X-rays are kept to a minimum.

**Contrast:** The use of a special liquid or paste is used during the procedure, known as a contrast; this enables the food or drink to show up on the X-ray. There are no associated issues known with using this special liquid, however please let us know if you feel unwell during the procedure.

**Constipation:** There is a possibility that you will have some constipation, and you may find that your faeces are white. This is due to the barium we use for the examination. The barium usually clears from your system within 24 hours.

**Pregnancy:** X-rays can be harmful to an unborn baby and should be avoided by patients who are or may be pregnant.

It is recommended that the examination is performed within 10 days of the first day of your menstrual period.

If your appointment is not within this time or if you think you may be pregnant, please contact the X-ray department before your appointment. When you arrive for your test, you will be asked when your last period started. If it is more than 10 days earlier, your appointment may be postponed.

## Preparing for your procedure

### Eating and drinking

- There is no preparation required for this examination. If you are able to eat and drink, you can continue to do so. If you are fed through a feeding tube, this can continue as usual, prior to the procedure.
- Please bring any special cups or feeding utensils that you use to help you with your eating and drinking. If there are any specific foods that you find difficult to swallow and would like to try them, please bring them along and we can support you with this.
- Remember to wear your dentures if you normally wear them when you eat and drink.

Please contact the booking team if:

- You plan to use hospital transport or require a hoist transfer.
- If you are, or might be pregnant.
- If you are a wheelchair user and it is not possible to remain in your own chair, help is available from our team, or a hoist to transfer you from your chair to the X-ray seat - please let us know in advance.

## Allergies

If you have asthma or any allergies, especially to contrast media, please inform us in advance.

## Medication

Please continue to take all medications as usual prior to your examination.

## Getting to us

Please check whether your appointment is at The Princess Alexandra Hospital in Harlow

If you are attending The Princess Alexandra Hospital (Hamstel Road, Harlow, Essex, CM20 1QX), follow the signage to the radiology reception, which is located on the ground floor, green zone. Please let the receptionists know that you have arrived for your appointment.

## When should I arrive?

Please arrive in the radiology department at your given appointment time. A notification through text or letter should have been sent to you to confirm this appointment.

## Can someone stay with me in the hospital?

You may have a friend or relative attend with you, but they will be asked to stay in the waiting area while you have your procedure.

**Children are not allowed in the waiting area unattended.** Our staff are not permitted to supervise children, so please ensure child care arrangements are in place to avoid your tests being rescheduled.

## Providing your consent

It is important to us that you are involved in the decisions about your care and treatment. Your consent for the procedure is automatically given when you accept the appointment. However, if you have any concerns, please liaise with your speech and language therapist.

## The day of the procedure

When you arrive at the hospital, please sign in at the radiology reception desk and take a seat in the waiting area.

## The procedure

Your identification will be checked by a radiographer or nurse, and a brief history will be taken; You may also be asked to remove jewellery, glasses, or other metal objects, which may show up on the X-rays.

The procedure will be explained to you.

- The procedure takes around 20 minutes to complete, however depending on your requirements, this can take longer. Please allow up to one hour for your appointment
- You will be asked to sit or stand by the X-ray machine
- One part of the machine may move up and down when you swallow to allow clear and high-quality images to be taken
- Your speech and language therapist will ask you to swallow small amounts of drink and food - please note there will be different tastes as the food or drink is mixed with contrast



- Your speech and language therapist and the radiologist will assess the effectiveness and safety of your swallow
- You may be asked to try a different position or technique to make your swallow safer or more efficient
- Each swallow you take is recorded so that it can be reviewed afterwards to help your speech and language therapist develop your management plan

Other professionals may be invited to the appointment if needed, for example, a physiotherapist or students in training.

Family/carers can be helpful in providing further information & may be able to help with feeding in specific cases. We try to show the images post examination to patient &/or family/carers.

### How long will this take?

This examination can take up to 20 minutes; you should be prepared to be in the department for up to an hour.

### After the procedure

At the end of the procedure, you will be able to go home or when you feel ready. You can eat or drink normally and take your normal medications, unless advised otherwise by the speech and language therapist.

### Can I drive after my procedure?

You are able to drive as soon as you are discharged from the department.

### How soon can I return to work?

You are able to return to work as soon as discharged from the department.

### Contacting the team

If you have any further questions about your procedure or an existing appointment, please contact the radiology department (**Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm**) at **01279 827179** and press option 1 for radiology appointments and then option 4.

If you have any queries **outside of working hours (after 4pm and on weekends)**, you will be redirected to the main radiology reception.

Please note appointment bookings cannot be made during this time.

### Your feedback matters

If you would like to give feedback on your care, please contact our patient experience team at [paht.pals@nhs.net](mailto:paht.pals@nhs.net) or **01279 827211**.

Please contact the communications team at [paht.communications@nhs.net](mailto:paht.communications@nhs.net) if you would like this leaflet in another language or format.