

# 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 and what you can expect to happen during the procedure.**

**If you have any further questions, please speak to the speech and language therapist, doctor or nurse caring for you.**

## What is videofluoroscopy (VFS)?

An x-ray is taken of you swallowing and a video is made of this x-ray.

You will be asked to chew and swallow different kinds of food and drink, depending on the problems with swallowing that you have.

We can then watch the video to study your chewing and swallowing and see if any food or drink gets stuck in your mouth or throat or goes down the wrong way (aspiration).

## Why should I have a videofluoroscopy?

If we see what happens when you swallow, we might be able to suggest things you can do to improve your swallowing. This may include exercises, different positions to eat or drink in or different types of food or drink to 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 try to reduce this risk.

We will also take care to make sure you are exposed to the least amount of x-ray radiation possible.

## Are there any alternatives?

There is no other way for your speech and language therapist to learn as much about your swallowing and help treat your symptoms.

## How can I prepare for my 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. You will need to be able to sit in a wheelchair or porter's chair to have the procedure.

## Asking for your consent

It is important that you feel involved in decisions about your care. For some treatments, you will be asked to sign a consent form to say that you agree to have the treatment and understand what it involves. You can withdraw your consent at any time, even if you have said 'yes' previously. If you would like more details about our consent process, please ask the speech and language therapist, doctor or nurse in charge of your care.

## What happens during a videofluoroscopy?

The assessment takes about 20 minutes.

You will be asked to sit or stand by the x-ray machine and one part of it may move around by your head and neck to get the best view when you swallow.

You will then be asked to have small amounts of food and drink, mixed with a special liquid which shows up on an x-ray (called a contrast). There will be different tastes.

The speech and language therapist will check how well and safely you swallow. They may ask you to try to swallow in a different way or position to make it safer and easier.

We will video you each time you swallow and look at this closely to develop your treatment plan.

## Will I feel any pain?

You should not feel any pain during the videofluoroscopy.

## What happens after a videofluoroscopy?

We will go through your results with you and discuss what happens next. Please let us know if you want any more information or if you have any concerns.

We will write a report which will be put in your medical notes if you are in hospital and your speech and language therapist will discuss the findings with your medical team.

You will then be able to go back to your ward and your normal activities.

Your video will be kept, and may be used for teaching purposes with your name and any identifying details removed. Please let us know if you do not want this to happen.

## Useful sources of information

This website gives more information on radiation and x-rays:

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/radiation](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/radiation)

This website gives more information on diagnosing dysphagia (swallowing difficulties):

[www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Dysphagia/Pages/Diagnosis](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Dysphagia/Pages/Diagnosis)

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your videofluoroscopy, please contact your speech and language therapist. You can do this by asking the doctors and nurses looking after you.

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

## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing (near the lift foyer). | **Tel:** 020 8725 2453 | **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

**NHS Choices** | **Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

**NHS 111** | **Tel:** 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

