

Maintaining your Swallow Function after Head and Neck Treatment

Radiation and / or surgery to the head and neck can lead to swallowing difficulties, termed 'Dysphagia'. These difficulties can occur during treatment or may develop long after treatment.

To help prevent possible long-term swallowing problems after your treatment and maintain your swallowing ability, we recommend that you complete the following swallowing exercises daily.

Mendelsohn

Put your fingers gently on your voice box. Do a 'dry' swallow and feel how your voice box moves up. Hold your voice box up using all your throat muscles, count to three and then let go.

Repeat this exercise five times.

Shaker

Lie flat on your back. Lift your head about four inches without lifting your shoulders and look at your toes. Hold the head lift like this for one minute and then rest for one minute. Next, lift your head up and down for 30 repetitions.

Repeat this exercise three times.

Masako

Stick out your tongue and hold it firmly between your lips or teeth. Swallow with your tongue in this position.

Repeat this exercise five times.

Effortful Swallow

Swallow as hard as you can with food or saliva. Push as hard as you can with the tongue against the roof of your mouth while you swallow.

Repeat this exercise five times.

Pitch Glide

Take a deep breath and let it out on an 'ah'. Slide up the scale as high as you possibly can until you reach a high squeaky voice. Hold that high voice for as long as you can (without straining).

Rest and repeat five times.

When to call us

If you notice that swallowing or your ability to do the exercises becomes more difficult please consider contacting your Head and Neck Team in case a review by your consultant is required. Please also contact the Speech and Language Therapy Team to discuss if a swallowing assessment is indicated.

Signs to look out for

- Food sticks abnormally in your throat.
- It takes longer to finish a meal.
- Coughing, clearing your throat or choking when you eat and/or drink
- Avoiding certain foods because they are too difficult to eat.
- Unplanned weight loss.
- Unexplained pneumonia, chest infections, fevers.

Contact Us

Profession	Name	Number
CNS Support Worker	Catherine Lyons	020 8725 3263
Speech & Language Therapist	SLT Head & Neck team <i>Macmillan Outreach SLT</i> <i>Kate Timms</i>	020 8725 1163 <i>Base: 020 8725 1163</i>
Dietitian	Dietetic Head & Neck team <i>Macmillan Outreach Dietitian</i> <i>Lauren Judge</i>	020 8725 0518 <i>Base: 020 8725 0518</i>
Consultant Head and Neck Team	Maxillo-Facial ENT	020 8725 1251 020 8725 2052

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit 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 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

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

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 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.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



Reference: SLT_MYSF_01 **Published:** February 2022 **Review date:** February 2024