

Swallow Maintenance

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 to maintain your swallowing ability, we recommend that you complete the following swallowing exercises once a day:

Masako

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

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 30 seconds and then rest for one minute.
Repeat this **three** times.

Next, lift your head up and down continuously for 30 repetitions.

If you have neck / shoulder difficulties, modify by sitting upright in a chair with a rolled-up towel under your chin and squeeze the towel pressing chin towards chest. Follow the above repetitions.

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.
Imagine swallowing a golf ball, squeezing all the muscles in your mouth and throat.

Repeat this exercise **five** times.

Pitch Glides

Take a deep breath and let it out on a low pitch 'ah' or 'ee' sound.
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 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

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your speech and language therapist on 020 8725 1163 (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm). Out of hours, please leave a message. **Email:** headandneckslt@stgeorges.nhs.uk

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 advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing.

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_SWM_01 **Published:** October 2023 **Review date:** October 2025