

Speech and Language Therapy Department

Adult Videofluoroscopic Swallow Study (VFSS)

Introduction

We have received a request from your Speech and Language Therapist for you to have a Videofluoroscopic Swallow Study (VFSS). This leaflet is designed to give you some information about the procedure, to help you prepare for the examination and to give you some idea of what to expect when you attend.

What is a Videofluoroscopic swallow study (VFSS)?

A videofluoroscopic swallow study (VFSS) is a moving x-ray examination of the mouth and throat

Why do I need a VFSS?

You will have been identified by a Speech and Language Therapist as possibly having swallowing difficulties. Some aspects of the swallow cannot be accurately checked without an x-ray. The x-ray will determine if there is a problem and if so what type of food and fluid are safest to eat, and whether there are any techniques to increase swallowing safety. You will need to give your permission for the procedure

What happens during the VFSS?

The VFSS team consists of a consultant radiologist who takes the x-rays and a radiographer who operates the x-ray machine and recording equipment. There will also be one or two speech and language therapists who will prepare the food and fluids, guide you through the assessment and interpret the findings along with the consultant.

Other professionals may be invited to the appointment if needed, e.g. physiotherapist or local speech and language therapist. Family/carers are encouraged to be involved in the examination, because involvement and understanding is important in helping you to accept any changes to your diet that may be needed.

The procedure will take approximately 30 minutes.

You may need to remove clothing and wear a gown if the radiographer feels it is appropriate. Otherwise, a gown will be worn over the top of clothes just to protect your clothing from spills. Avoid wearing anything around the neck area which will impact the view of the x-ray, i.e. high neck jumpers, scarves or ties. Avoid necklaces and earrings which will need to be removed.

You will be appropriately positioned standing or seated close to the x-ray machine. If you are a wheelchair user it is not possible to remain seated in your own chair, and help is

available by a member of staff or a hoist to transfer you from your chair to the x-ray seat. Please let us know in advance if you will need help.

If you have a feeding tube in your nose or stomach it does not have to be removed.

You will be given small amounts of liquid, and different textured food as appropriate, coated in a paste that will show up on the x-ray. It tastes chalky but is not unpleasant. During eating and drinking, x-ray pictures will appear on a television monitor showing the swallow.

You will be able to rinse your mouth as soon as the examination is finished.

What are the risks?

We are all exposed to natural background radiation every day of our lives. Each x-ray examination gives us a small additional dose. This dose varies with each type of examination. Everything is done within the x-ray department to minimise this dose.

Are there people who are not suitable for VFSS?

If any of the following applies you should not undergo VFSS:

- If you are pregnant
- If you are medically unstable and fluctuating level of consciousness
- If you are unable to maintain an appropriate position
- If you have extreme distress or anxiety
- If you are known to have had an adverse reaction to barium before
- If you are nil-by-mouth for reasons other than swallowing problems.

Do I need any special preparation before the examination?

It is not necessary to go without food or fluids before the examination as it is not essential to have an empty stomach.

What if I cannot attend for my appointment?

Your appointment time will have been agreed with you beforehand, but if something happens and you cannot attend it is essential you contact the Speech and Language Therapy Department (see telephone numbers at the end of the leaflet) as soon as possible. You will then be offered another date and we will be able to reallocate valuable time to someone else.

What happens after the VFSS?

The results will be discussed in brief with you immediately after the x-ray. If you are at home the report will be sent to the local Speech and Language Therapist and your GP within one week. The Speech and Language Therapist will get in touch with you to discuss the results and implications in more detail if this is needed. A copy of the report can be given to you if you would like this.

I need an ambulance. Can you arrange this?

If you need an ambulance, you must ask your GP Surgery to arrange one, giving them at least three working days' notice. Please inform the department if you are arriving by ambulance.

What if I have any questions, suggestions or complaints?

Should you have any worries or concerns, please make these known to the person conducting the examination or by letter addressed to the hospital you are attending your appointment:

Further information

For any queries please contact your Speech and Language Therapist.

Telephone:	Denton Park	-	0191 2295848
	RVI	-	0191 2824324
	Freeman	-	0191 2336161 ext 38270

(Monday to Friday 9.00am to 4.00pm)

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) can offer on-the-spot advice and information about the NHS. You can contact them on freephone 0800 032 02 02 or e-mail northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

Useful websites

If you would like further information about health conditions and treatment options, you may wish to have a look at the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk. On this website there is an information prescription generator www.nhs.uk/ips which brings together a wealth of approved patient information from the NHS and charity partners which you may find helpful

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