

Speech and language therapy

# Videofluoroscopy

## Information for patients, relatives and carers

### Introduction

This leaflet explains what a videofluoroscopy is and how to prepare for your child to have the study. Please feel free to ask your speech and language therapist any questions you may have about the information below.

### What is a videofluoroscopy?

It is a special X-ray examination to see what is happening inside the mouth and throat when someone eats, drinks and swallows. During the test, a visual recording is made showing the swallowing of a variety of different types of food and drink (soft, hard, chewy and so on).

### Why does my child need to have this test?

Swallowing problems can show themselves in a variety of ways and might include coughing or choking when eating, weight loss, frequent colds, chest infections or taking a long time over meals.

'Safe' swallowing is where food or liquid moves from the mouth into the throat, down the food pipe and into the stomach. The food and windpipe are close together and sometimes food and drink can enter the windpipe.

This can make you cough – something we have all experienced when food or drink 'goes down the wrong way'. Medical staff might refer to this as 'aspiration'. If it happens frequently, it can lead to an increase in chest infections and damage to the lungs.

We use videofluoroscopy to take a closer look at how your child swallows. It helps us identify the problems they are having. It might allow us to recommend ways of making feeding easier and safer. This will help ensure your child gets enough food or liquid to grow and develop healthily.

### Are there any risks associated with videofluoroscopy?

This may depend upon your child's condition. Any specific risks will be discussed with you before the test.

Videofluoroscopy uses X-rays. This is a form of radiation. Radiation can be harmful in large doses, but this procedure only uses a small amount. We take every precaution when using radiation. For example, we will not allow other young babies and children in the X-ray room. So, please arrange childcare for them if possible.

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We would not recommend videofluoroscopy if the benefits did not outweigh any potential risks. We are happy to discuss any concerns you may have about the test.

## Does the test hurt?

No, the test is completely painless, and it does not involve any needles or tubes.

The X-ray room can be a strange environment for a child. It might sometimes make them nervous or upset. We'll do our best to prepare and support your child during this test. We'll try to make them relaxed and comfortable. This should encourage your child to eat and swallow the way they would do at home as much as possible.

## Are there any alternatives to this test?

No. We only request this test if we feel that this is the best way to find out more information about your child's condition.

## Is there anything I should do to prepare for my child's appointment?

- yes. Please bring different types of food and drink to the appointment. Usually, it's best to bring something that your child finds easy to eat and something they find more difficult to eat.
- as the videofluoroscopy involves eating and drinking, it is important to make sure your child is hungry, thirsty and ready to eat/drink during the test. However, it is not necessary to stop them eating and drinking completely on the day of the appointment
- bring familiar foods, cups, spoons and so on with you on the day. This helps us make the test as close to having a normal meal as possible
- if your child is taking thickened fluids, **please do not prepare the liquid in advance**. This should be prepared with the therapist at the time of the study
- make sure that your child is not wearing any necklaces, earrings or tops which have metal poppers or fastenings. These will show up on the X-ray and affect the results

## What happens on the day of the test?

1. We will ask you to come to the X-ray (imaging) department for your child's videofluoroscopy on Level 3 in the Queen Elizabeth Queen Mother Building at St Mary's Hospital. Check in at reception on Level 3. The speech and language therapist will be collect you from reception to take you to the right room.
2. The speech and language therapist will be there to do the test with a radiographer who will also be there to work the equipment.

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3. A white substance or clear liquid (contrast) will be mixed with the food and drink to be given to your child. It is almost tasteless. When mixed it enables the food and drink to show up on the X-ray. We will then ask your child to eat and swallow a small amount of this food. You will feed your child.
  4. If your child uses a wheelchair, they can stay in it during the test. If not, we might ask them to sit in a special chair (like a car seat).
  5. Please be assured that no X-ray equipment touches your child during videofluoroscopy.
  6. We encourage you to stay with your child during the test, especially if they need help feeding themselves. However, if you are pregnant, you will not be able to come into the X-ray room, as there is a small risk of X-ray radiation damaging your unborn child.
  7. The videofluoroscopy itself usually only takes a few minutes to complete. However, it often takes time to set up the equipment, then settle and position your child. This means the procedure can last between 10 and 40 minutes in total.

## When will I have the results?

- if your child is an outpatient, the results will be shared with your community speech and language therapist. They will contact you to discuss the results. You will receive the clinic letter containing the results within a few weeks after the study
- if your child is an inpatient, the hospital speech and language therapy team will share the results with you as soon as a review of the images is completed after the study is done

The test is recorded, and we can explain any difficulties your child has.

If we think you should make changes to your child's current way of eating and drinking, these will be discussed with you:

- if your child is an outpatient, by your community speech and language therapist
- if your child is an inpatient, by the hospital speech and language therapy team

## Is there anything I need to watch out for at home?

Your child's poo may be white in appearance. This is the contrast passing out of their system and is nothing to worry about.

The speech and language therapist will advise you about any precautions you need to take and what to do about any symptoms your child may experience.

## When can my child get back to normal?

Your child can return to nursery or school or resume their normal activities immediately after the test.

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## What should I do if I cannot attend the appointment?

Please contact our speech and language therapy department as soon as possible on 020 7312 6092 or 020 7312 5353. If there is no answer, please leave a message.

We can then offer this date to another child and agree a new appointment date and time with you. We will confirm this with a letter in the post.

## How do I make a comment about my child's visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday). You can also email PALS at [imperial.pals@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.pals@nhs.net) The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street  
London W2 1NY

Email: [ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net](mailto:ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net)

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

## Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:  
[imperial.communications@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.communications@nhs.net)

## Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: [www.imperial.nhs.uk](http://www.imperial.nhs.uk)

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