

Videofluoroscopy

Also known as a video swallow

Information for patients



What is a videofluoroscopy?

A videofluoroscopy is an examination of swallowing that uses moving x-rays to see how food and drink moves through the mouth and throat.

It is a painless procedure, which usually takes 20-30 minutes to complete. It will be carried out by two Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) and a Specialist Radiographer in the X-ray department at Chapel Allerton Hospital (inpatients only), St James's University Hospital or Leeds General Infirmary.

We suggest you allow up to an hour for your appointment in case of unavoidable delays.

How will this examination help me?

Videofluoroscopy can help identify:

- If any food or drink is going down the wrong way (i.e. into the airway).
- If food or drink is sticking in your throat.
- Why these problems are happening.
- Any food or drink consistencies that are easier to chew and swallow than others.
- Any strategies that may make swallowing easier.
- Any exercises that may improve your swallowing muscles.

The videofluoroscopy results will be shared with your referring SLT and your doctor. Your SLT will discuss the results with you. This information can help you make important decisions with your health care providers about your swallowing, nutrition, and health.

What happens during a videofluoroscopy?

You will be asked to sit or stand by the X-ray machine.

The SLT may give you small amounts of food and drink including:

- Yoghurt/Custard
- Banana
- Bread
- Biscuit

X-ray dyes (also known as 'contrast' called barium and Omnipaque) are combined with the food and drink items. X-ray video images are taken whilst you swallow. These images are stored electronically.

If you have any food allergies/intolerances, please inform your referring SLT so alternative foods can be arranged.

How do I prepare for this examination?

There is no preparation for this examination. If you are already able to eat and drink, you can continue to do so. If you are fed through a tube, this can continue as normal. Please bring any special cups or feeding utensils that you use to help you with your eating and drinking. Remember to wear your dentures if you normally have these in when you eat and drink. Do not stop taking vital medicines (heart drugs, steroids, diuretics/water tablets etc.)

Are there any side-effects?

This is a safe examination that is usually successful. You will be able to resume normal activities immediately afterwards.

The barium can have a constipating effect and you may notice your stools have a white colour over the next few days - this is normal.

Potential risks of videofluoroscopy:

Radiation

This procedure involves x-rays. Individuals who are, or might be pregnant must inform a member of staff in advance.

The amount of radiation used is more than an ordinary x-ray of the chest or body and is equal to the natural radiation we receive from the atmosphere over a period of approximately two years. The risk from this radiation dose is very low.

Allergic reaction

Some people may be allergic to the x-ray dye or medicines we give you. This is very rare. If you have any known allergies, please tell the member of staff who is performing your examination.

Aspiration

Sometimes when we swallow, some of the food/drink can “go the wrong way” (ie. into the airway). This is known as aspiration.

Aspiration may happen with food/drink items mixed with the contrast during videofluoroscopy. If a lot of the contrast goes into your airway, we will make sure you cough most of it up before you leave the department. The risk of becoming unwell because of this is very small.

Despite these small risks your doctor and SLT believe it is beneficial for you to have this examination.

Contact Details

Should you have any concerns or further questions, please do not hesitate to contact Speech & Language Therapy:

Tel: **0113 206 4087**