

Videofluoroscopy

What is a videofluoroscopy?

A videofluoroscopy is an x-ray of swallowing. During the examination you will be given drinks and foods that can be seen on x-ray. We will take a series of x-rays while you are swallowing to see how the food and drink moves through your mouth and throat and into your oesophagus (food pipe).

Why do I need a videofluoroscopy?

You have been referred for a videofluoroscopy so we can have a closer look at how your swallowing works and how safe and efficient it is. This might be to see if small amounts of food or drink are going down the wrong way (into your windpipe) or getting stuck in your throat.

During the examination we can also try strategies that might help to make swallowing easier and identify if there are any swallowing exercises that could improve your swallowing.

What happens during a videofluoroscopy?

The examination will take about 20 minutes. There will be two Speech and Language Therapists and a Radiographer in the room and you will be asked to sit in our videofluoroscopy chair by the x-ray machine. If you have your own wheelchair and are not able to transfer we will be able to complete the examination while you are in your own chair as long as it is not wider than 73 cm. If you think your chair is wider than this please contact the Speech and Language Therapy team. You might need to remove bulky clothing and be asked to remove jewellery. Glasses and hearing aids will not need to be removed. The x-ray machine may move when you swallow.

What will I be given to eat and drink?

We will offer a range of food and drink you will not necessarily be offered every type of food listed here. Please let us know if you have an allergy or intolerance to any of the items listed below before the day of your appointment. In most cases we will be able to offer an alternative to ensure the examination is as safe as possible. You may be asked to bring your own foods which are a similar consistency to those below. If you are having particular difficulties with a specific food, please feel free to discuss this with your Speech and Language Therapist who may advise you to bring a small amount of that food in.

Water soluble contrast – this contains iodine and may contain an orange flavouring depending on the contrast used on the day.

Barium sulphate – this contains strawberry and cherry or strawberry and vanilla flavouring.

Yoghurt – this will have barium sulphate mixed in

Banana – this will be coated in the yoghurt and barium mixture

Jammie dodger or digestive biscuit - this will be coated in the yoghurt and barium mixture

What are the risks of this examination?

All x-ray procedures involve exposure to radiation and carry a small risk. The radiation dose for this examination is small, the radiographer monitors the dose throughout and keeps this as low as reasonably possible.

During the examination there is a risk that some contrast material may be aspirated (go down the wrong way) into your trachea and lungs. This might make you cough, all care will be taken to minimise this risk.

How do I prepare for my videofluoroscopy?

If you are allergic to any medications and did not let us know when the appointment was booked; if you have any of the conditions listed below or are pregnant, you must let us know before the day of your appointment by calling 01722 345571 or emailing shc-tr.Speechtherapy@nhs.net

Severe liver disease, severe kidney disease, intractable heart failure, myasthenia gravis, phaeochromocytoma, disturbed thyroid function, sickle cell disease, severe asthma.

You can eat and drink as usual before the examination, ensure you are well hydrated.

Take any medications as usual on the day of the examination.

Please avoid wearing earrings and necklaces that you cannot easily remove yourself and clothes with metal, for example zips or press studs around the neck and chest area that cannot easily be removed.

You can bring a friend or relative along to your appointment, however for safety reasons they will not be allowed to enter the x-ray room with you when the x-rays are being taken, except in very special circumstances.

How will I feel after my videofluoroscopy?

Most people have no side effects from this examination. However, barium sulphate is often used during a videofluoroscopy and there is a possibility that you will have some constipation and you may find that your faeces are white for a day or two. The barium sulphate should clear from your system within 24 hours. You should assist the clearance of barium by drinking plenty of clear fluids following the examination.

What happens after my videofluoroscopy?

The Speech and Language Therapist may give you some immediate feedback, however this information is subject to change as all the images from the examination will be formally reviewed and reported following the clinic.

You will receive a copy of the letter that is sent to your GP explaining the results of the examination and any further Speech and Language Therapy intervention that is needed. If appropriate we may ask your GP to make onward referrals to other medical teams.

It is not possible to take photos or videos of your x-ray images during the clinic, however you can apply to the PACS office for a copy of your examination, please ask for further information during your appointment if required.