

Videofluoroscopy swallow study

Information for parents

What is a Videofluoroscopy swallow study (VFSS)?

VFSS shows the function of swallowing and safety in detail. It can help determine whether your child has a swallowing difficulty. The results may guide decisions around your child's eating and drinking or medical care.

The procedure involves taking a moving x-ray of your child eating and drinking. The x-ray images are recorded and analysed by Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs).

The appointment will take around 20 minutes.

What will happen during the VFSS?

Your child will sit in a special chair next to the x-ray machine. They will be given food and drink mixed with barium. Barium is a white powder that is safe to swallow. It makes the food and drink show up on the x-ray.

As your child eats and drinks, moving x-ray images of their head and neck will be taken. This will show where the food and drink is going.

The x-ray machine makes noises but it will not touch your child. It is important that your child sits as still as possible when the images are being taken.

Can my child eat and drink before the appointment?

Yes, there is no need to starve your child before the appointment. It will help if your child is feeling hungry and thirsty. You may be able to adjust their mealtimes to encourage hunger.

What should I bring?

Please bring any **utensils** your child normally uses to eat and drink e.g.

- Bottle and teat
- Spoon
- Sippy cup
- Sports/straw bottle

Please bring a selection of **food and drink** that your child normally enjoys including:

- a **thin/regular drink** (e.g. formula, milk, juice)
- a couple of different **snacks** (e.g. yoghurt, biscuit, cake, bread).

Who will be there?

There will be several health professionals in the x-ray room, including two Speech and Language Therapists, and a Radiographer. This is necessary to safely complete the procedure.

One parent/carer will be invited to stay with your child. They will be given protective leads to wear. All other adults will be asked to stand behind a protective screen.

- If you are pregnant you will not be able to stay in the x-ray room during the procedure.
- Please do not bring other children to the appointment.
- If your child has a community Speech and Language Therapist they will be invited to attend.

Is VFSS safe?

Like any x-ray VFSS does involve a small amount of radiation. The Radiographer takes measures to ensure the dose is as low as possible.

VFSS is a safe procedure. For many children it is easy and stress-free.

If your child does have a swallowing difficulty, then a very small amount of food or drink may go down the wrong way, into their airway. This is known as aspiration.

Some children may refuse to eat or drink during the VFSS. Talk to your child beforehand about what to expect, as this may help them feel more comfortable. If you think your child will find the VFSS difficult, please talk to your community Speech and Language Therapist.

When do I get the results?

The Speech and Language Therapist may give you initial results after the VFSS. These results will need to be confirmed after the appointment by reviewing the recorded images. You will receive a written report with full results within two weeks of the VFSS. You can discuss the report and results with your community Speech and Language Therapist.

Next steps

Your child's bowel movements may appear pale after the VFSS. This is a normal side effect of barium. Your child's Speech and Language Therapist and/or doctor will provide recommendations for your child's eating and drinking. These may involve changes to your child's diet, a trial of thickened fluids or alternative/tube feeding.

Contact information:

Speech and Language Therapy: 020 3299 32152

X-ray department: 020 3299 33111

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams.

Tel: **020 3299 4618**

Email: **kings.pals@nhs.net**

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