



## Videofluoroscopy Swallow Study (VFSS)

### A patient's guide



### Can anyone have a VFSS?

Not everyone will be suitable for a VFSS.

Examples include:

- Medical instability, e.g. drowsiness, respiratory distress
- Difficulty sitting up
- Difficulty co-operating with the procedure
- If the person is pregnant
- Known or suspected adverse reaction to omnipaque/barium

As omnipaque is used during the procedure, some people may not be appropriate to consume this due to:

- Thyrotoxicosis
- History of serious reaction or anaphylaxis to omnipaque or iodine based media contrast
- Pregnant patients, unless benefit exceeds risk as stated by the consultant radiologist
- Patient/ parent declines treatment under the PGD

### Side effects of contrast:

Omnipaque (specific to oral use):

- Diarrhea (very common)
- Nausea, vomiting (common)
- Abdominal pain (uncommon)

Barium (specific to oral use):

- Nausea
- Constipation
- White coloured stools

### Are there any alternatives to VFSS?

Fibreoptic Endoscopic Evaluation of Swallowing (FEES) can be used for people with swallowing problems. It is a procedure which involves passing a small flexible instrument through the nose to see inside the throat when swallowing. At the Whittington Hospital, FEES is currently only available for people who are in hospital.

### Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or

[whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net)

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please contact us on 020 7288 3182. We will try our best to meet your needs.

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### **What is a videofluoroscopy?**

A videofluoroscopy (VFSS) uses video to record an x-ray examination of your swallowing in detail. You will be asked to chew and swallow different varieties of foods and drinks according to your identified difficulties, and this will be recorded on video during the procedure to allow us to examine what occurred. The study allows us to see how you are currently managing with chewing and swallowing, and whether food or drink gets stuck in your mouth or throat or goes down the wrong way (aspiration).

### **What are the benefits of having a VFSS?**

The VFSS allows your speech and language therapist to see what happens when you swallow. We may then be able to recommend things you can do to improve your swallowing, such as exercises, different positions to eat or drink in, or different types of food or drink that will make swallowing safer or easier.

### **What are the risks?**

During the VFSS, there is a risk that some material may go down the wrong way. We try to minimise this risk and the amount of material we use. VFSS uses small amounts of X-ray radiation; we also try to minimise the amount of X-ray radiation you are exposed to. The use of contrast (a dye which shows up on X-rays) can have side effects, as explained overleaf.

### **Where?**

The X-ray department at The Whittington Hospital (level 3). Please report to the main reception desk in the X-ray department (at least 15 minutes prior to your appointment time). The procedure will take no more than 30 minutes.

### **Who?**

A radiographer and two speech and language therapists will be present. Other health professionals may also be present. You are welcome to bring a member of your family or a friend/carer with you.

### **How do I prepare?**

You can continue your normal activities. If you are already eating and drinking, you can continue to do so. If you have any food allergies, please let your SLT know prior to the clinic and bring alternatives as discussed. If there are specific foods that are particularly challenging for you, it may be useful to bring a small amount with you to use in the study. If you are fed through a tube, this can continue.

### **What happens?**

The assessment takes about 20 minutes. You will be asked to sit by the X-ray machine. One part of the machine may move around by your head and neck when you swallow to achieve the best view. You will be asked to take small amounts of drink and food as appropriate (please note there will be different tastes). The food or drink is mixed with 'omnipaque' or 'barium' (contrast) which shows up on X-ray. You may be asked to try a different position or strategy to make your swallow safer or more efficient. You should not experience any pain. Each swallow is recorded on video so that it can be reviewed later to help develop your treatment plan.

### **After the procedure?**

The speech and language therapist will go through the results of the assessment and discuss what will happen next. The speech and language therapist will then write a report which will be sent to your GP or put in your medical notes if you are in hospital. He/she will also discuss the findings with your medical team. You will then be able to go home or back to your ward and can resume your normal activities. The recording of the assessment will be kept by the speech and language therapy department. It may be used for teaching purposes - please let us know if you do not want this to happen.