

Patient information

Fibre-optic Endoscopic Evaluation of Swallowing (FEES)

Speech and Language Therapy - Therapies Speciality

Your Speech and Language Therapist has arranged for you to have a Fibre-optic Endoscopic Evaluation of Swallowing (FEES). This leaflet explains what will happen during and after your examination.

What is a Fibre-optic Endoscopic Evaluation of Swallowing (FEES)?

When you have a bedside swallowing test the Speech and Language Therapist can't see what is happening inside your mouth and throat.

During FEES, the therapist uses a very small, tube-like camera with a light on the end. This is called an endoscope. The endoscope is flexible, and connects to a computer and video monitor, so that the therapist can see inside your throat. This allows us to see what is happening inside your throat as you swallow different types of food and drink.

What is the aim of a FEES?

Viewing your swallow from the inside of your throat allows us to see what is safe for you to eat and drink and may give advice as to how to make your swallowing safer and easier. It may also help us to decide what exercises to give you to help your swallow recover.

What are the benefits of having a FEES?

A FEES can help the therapist find out:

- if food is going into your airway instead of your stomach, called aspiration.
- what parts of your mouth and throat may not be working well.
- what kinds of food are safest for you to swallow.
- if certain positions or strategies help you swallow better.

What are the risks of having a FEES?

FEES is a safe technique with very few problems reported, however if you have a history of nose bleeds or fainting, please let your therapist know before the examination as this may increase the risk of these events.

Will I have an anaesthetic?

Normally an anaesthetic spray is **not** used as this can affect your swallowing ability. Rarely, you may be given a topical anaesthetic which is sprayed up your nose. Like all medicines, local anaesthetics may sometimes cause side effects such as dizziness, blurred vision, drowsiness and occasionally fainting.

Serious side effects of an anaesthetic are rare, and include fits, low blood pressure, slowed breathing and changes in heartbeat, which may be life-threatening. If you have any concerns about any of these effects, you should discuss them with your doctor.

Are there any alternatives to FEES?

Videofluoroscopy (VFS) is another instrumental swallowing assessment. It is a special type of 'moving X-ray' that records what happens as you eat and drink. It allows the therapist to see whether food and drink is 'going down the right way'. You will be asked to swallow small amounts of food and liquid mixed with Barium (a relatively tasteless, chalky white paste). This allows the food to show up on X-ray. This is often selected for patients who are able to transfer to another chair or sit upright in their wheelchair.

Preparing for your assessment

There is no preparation necessary for this test. If you are eating and drinking then you may continue to do so right up until the FEES is carried out.

The day of your FEES

There will be two Speech and Language Therapists present during your test. The FEES equipment can be moved to different places, which means that it can be completed at your bedside if you are in hospital, or sitting upright in a clinic.

- You will be seated or supported in bed so that you are comfortable.
- The Speech and Language Therapist will gently insert the tube through your nose and will bend it to look into your throat.
- You will be given some things to eat and drink.
- The therapists will see a picture of your throat on the computer screen and can watch the food/drink as it passes through.
- The camera will usually be in place for between five and 15 minutes.

Results

The Speech and Language Therapist will tell you the results immediately and you may even watch the video so you can see the test yourself. The therapist will use the results to plan your treatment and will talk to you about what kinds of food and drink are the safest for you. You may start swallowing therapy soon after your test.

If you have the FEES in an outpatient clinic, you can return home straight after the test has finished.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

If you have any queries or concerns about this procedure please call the Speech and Language Therapy Department on:

Tel: 0151 706 2703 or 0151 282 6318

Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 2703 or 18001 0151 706 6318

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