

## Flexible endoscopic evaluation of swallowing (FEES) test

### Patient information

This information sheet explains what a FEES test is and how to prepare for it. Please ask your speech and language therapist any questions you have about this information.

#### What is a FEES test?

A FEES test uses a special device called an endoscope to see what is happening inside your throat when you eat and drink. The endoscope is a long, thin flexible tube with a light and a camera at one end, which allows images of the body to be projected onto a screen.

#### Why do I need to have this test?

You may have difficulty eating and drinking or have symptoms that suggest there is a problem with your swallowing. You may have already seen a speech and language therapist (a healthcare professional with specialist knowledge of swallowing problems) at the hospital, your community health centre or at home.

Sometimes doctors and speech and language therapists need more detailed information about your swallowing.

A FEES test provides a clearer picture of what is happening inside your throat when you swallow. The test will help health professionals understand why you are having problems swallowing and decide how best to manage them.

A FEES test may be one of several tests carried out to look at how you swallow.

#### What will happen during the test?

Two speech and language therapists, or a speech and language therapist and a nurse will carry out the test.

#### If you are:

- an outpatient – you will sit in a chair during the test.
- an inpatient – you will either sit in a chair or in bed.

The speech and language therapist will pass the endoscope through your nose to the back of the throat.

It may feel strange and slightly uncomfortable at first as the endoscope passes through your nose, but it will not hurt. The discomfort only lasts a few seconds, and most people can cope by relaxing and breathing gently.

You will be asked to swallow several mouthfuls of liquids and different types of foods depending on your swallowing problem. Examples of food include custard, apple puree, soft cake and biscuit. It is a good idea to tell us the sort of foods you find difficult to swallow a few days before the test.

**If you are:**

- an outpatient – we will discuss this with you when your FEES test is arranged by phone. You can also bring some foods that you find difficult to swallow along to the test.
- an inpatient – speak to a nurse or ask to talk to a member of our team.

**Does anything else happen during the test?**

Yes. We may use blue or green food colouring in food and liquids during the test so that we can see them clearly inside your throat.

We may ask you to try swallowing in a different way to see if this improves your swallow.

We will also record the images taken and look at them later to check and record the results of the test.

**How long does the test take?**

The test takes about 15-25 minutes. If you are attending as an outpatient, more time may be needed to discuss your problems and the results. The whole appointment should last about one hour. You will not feel sore after the test. You can eat and drink as usual afterwards unless we advise you not to following the results of the test.

**Where will the appointment take place?**

**If you are:**

- an outpatient – the test will take place at either Harefield Hospital or Royal Brompton Hospital. You will find details of the time and where to come in your appointment letter.
- an inpatient – the test will take place on the ward.

**Are there any risks or side effects?**

The procedure is very safe and rarely has side effects. Side effects may include mild nose bleeding, but this is not common.

We may see something called aspiration during the test as you are swallowing.

Aspiration is when food or drink goes down the wrong way towards the lungs and happens when there is a problem with your swallowing.

If we see aspiration, we will ask you to cough to clear your airway. We may ask you to try swallowing different types of foods or liquids, or to swallow in a different way to try to reduce the amount of aspiration. We will be careful to keep the amount of aspiration to a minimum during the test.

### **Is there anything else I need to know?**

You can eat and drink and take your medicines as usual. If you are being fed through a tube into your stomach, you can carry on having your feeds.

### **When will I get the results?**

We will explain the results to you after the test. However, we will need to look at the video recording of the test carefully before we are able to write the report for your doctor. The full results are usually available for your doctor within one week. If you need to make any changes to your eating and drinking as a result of the test, we will discuss them with you.

### **Useful contacts**

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our speech and language therapy staff.

#### **Royal Brompton Hospital**

**Phone:** 020 7352 8121 ext 84452 (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm)

#### **Harefield Hospital**

**Phone:** 01895 828501 (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm)

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If you need help or advice about any service or department at our hospitals, and feel unable to talk to those people responsible for your care, call the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 020 7349 7715 or email [pals@rbht.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@rbht.nhs.uk). This is a confidential service.

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