

# Fiberoptic endoscopic evaluation of the swallow (FEES)

## A patient's advice sheet

### Why have I been given an appointment in the clinic?

You have been referred to the Speech and Language Therapy Department because you have had some difficulties swallowing.

You may have had surgery or other treatment that has affected your swallowing or caused airway damage. The speech and language therapists are trained to assess and treat swallowing problems.

FEES examination enables us to assess your swallowing and look at your airway. It also enables us to trial different foods and/or techniques to see if this helps you to swallow more effectively.

### What happens during the assessment?

A team of two people will carry out the examination. This team could be made up of a speech and language therapist and a doctor, two speech and language therapists or a speech and language therapist with another member of the team such as a nurse or healthcare assistant. Other members of staff such as a physiotherapist may also be present.

You will be asked to sit in a comfortable chair. If you are currently in hospital, the assessment will be carried out while you are in bed or sitting in a chair.

A small, flexible endoscope (thin, black tube) will be placed into one nostril and moved through your nose.

When the end of the endoscope is positioned just beyond the back of the nose, a clear view

of your throat is obtained. You will be able to see your throat (including your vocal cords) on the television monitor if you choose. You may be given some food and drink to swallow.

This is usually coloured with a small amount of blue or green food colouring to enable a clear view of the food/drink while you swallow. Your swallowing will be observed and recorded for analysis at a later time.

If you would like to use particular cups and cutlery, please bring these with you. If there is a certain food, medication or drink that you would like to try, then you can also bring this with you. A family member and/or carer may attend.

### When will I know the results?

You will be given some basic feedback and advice immediately after the procedure.

However, detailed results will only be available when a report has been written. The report will be sent to your doctor and a copy will be filed in your medical notes.

### Is the procedure safe? Is it uncomfortable?

The procedure is safe and rarely has side effects. At times the passing of the endoscope through the nose causes mild to moderate discomfort. Once the endoscope is positioned above the throat, any discomfort usually resolves quickly. You can ask the speech therapist to stop at any point.

### **How long will it take?**

The procedure takes approximately 10 to 15 minutes. For outpatients, the clinic generally runs on time although you may experience a small delay. Your patience in these circumstances would be appreciated.

### **Can I eat before my appointment?**

Unless you have been advised otherwise, you can eat and drink as normal before your appointment. If you are feeding through a tube currently, you can take your feeds as normal up until your appointment time.

### **What happens afterwards?**

You can return to the ward or go home immediately after the appointment. If appropriate, a follow-up appointment will be made for you to see the speech and language therapist to discuss the results in more detail and be given further advice and exercises to make your swallowing easier.

If we feel you would benefit from further specialist assessment of your upper airway, we may refer you onto the Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) department.

You may also have an appointment made for you to attend the Outpatients Department.

**If you have any questions, please contact Speech & Language Therapy on 01223 638732**