

## Videofluoroscopic Swallow Study

### What is a videofluoroscopic swallow study?

It is a recorded x-ray test in which your child swallows barium under an X-ray, so the process of swallowing and the movement of food from the mouth to the stomach can be watched. It is also called a modified barium swallow study.

### Why is it performed?

Videofluoroscopic swallow studies are recommended when there is a concern about how well your child swallows, how well the airway is protected during swallowing, and how well food moves from the mouth to the stomach. Doctors are particularly interested in seeing whether food or liquid is being aspirated (drawn into) the child's airway. This is a serious situation which can result in chronic lung and breathing problems.

A videofluoroscopic swallow study may be considered for your child if several of the following issues occur regularly:

- Frequent choking
- Cough or gagging during meals
- Trouble handling saliva
- Gurgly respiration
- Chronic respiratory problems (such as pneumonia)
- Very fussy eating behaviors
- Difficulty directing food to be swallowed

Your child's doctor will make the referral for this study.

### Where is the study done?

The study is usually done on an outpatient basis in the Radiology department. Usually the radiologist, a speech pathologist and occupational therapist are present to interpret the study.

### What to expect

Prior to the study an interview with you and your child should take place to evaluate your child's eating skills and to discuss your concerns. This gives the therapist a head start on knowing how to present the barium and what types of textures will be necessary to use during the study (thick, thin, chewy, etc.)

The purpose of the study is to view as typical a swallow as possible. As a parent, you may be asked to be present during the study to help your child remain calm. You and any other participants will be required to wear X-ray protection capes.

## IN CARE OF KIDS



Your child will be seated in an upright support chair. Views may be taken from the front and/or side. Your child will be given one or more differently textured barium mixtures that show up well on x-ray. Some children take thin liquid and others may take a paste or chewable food that has been coated with barium. You might be asked to bring your child's favorite bottle, cup or spoon to keep the procedure as familiar to your child as possible. The barium liquid or paste can be mixed with favorite foods you bring from home.

Your child is given small tastes, and the video x-ray traces the swallow and follows the food or liquid down the throat to the stomach. Not much barium is needed to get a good view of a swallow. Different treatment options may be tried on the

spot if the professionals find a problem and want to see how different textures or positions change the results.

## Results

The results will be shared with you by your child's doctor, the radiologist, and/or the other specialists present. The future course of action will be discussed and determined by your primary care team.

Adapted from **Feeding and Nutrition for the Child with Special Needs** by Marsha Dunn Klein and Tracy Delaney. Therapy Skill Builders, 1994. Used with permission.

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