

Speech & Language Therapy

Videofluoroscopic Swallowing (VFS) Assessment (Swallowing X-ray)

Videofluoroscopic Swallowing (VFS) Assessment

You have been referred for investigation of your swallowing under videofluoroscopy.

What is a videofluoroscopic swallowing assessment?

A VFS assessment is a moving x-ray of your swallow.

It enables us to see exactly what is happening when you swallow – from the mouth to the top of the oesophagus (food pipe).

If you are having any difficulties swallowing, a VFS can help to identify what may be contributing to those difficulties and what can help.

The procedure uses low levels of radiation – slightly more than having a chest x-ray.

Do I need to prepare anything?

No special preparation is needed, i.e. you do not need to fast beforehand. There is no need to undress. A gown may be provided to wear over your clothes. You will need to remove any jewellery.

If you eat a special diet e.g. gluten/dairy free, please bring some bread, crackers or biscuits, and yoghurt which is safe for you to eat.

If you use specialised equipment for eating and drinking at home, please bring this with you, e.g. cups, spoons, etc.

Where do I go for the appointment?

Videofluoroscopy usually takes place in the X-ray Outpatients Department (B7) at the Royal United Hospital in Bath.

You will be sent an appointment letter with more information about the date, time and place. You are welcome to bring a family member or carer with you.

If transport is required, please speak to your GP.

If you are an inpatient, you will be taken to the X-ray Department by the porters.

What will happen in the assessment?

You will be asked to sit (or stand) between the x-ray screens.

You will be given small amounts of different consistencies of food and drink to swallow, for example, water, yoghurt, bread.

The type of food or drink you will be asked to swallow will depend on the swallowing difficulties you are experiencing.



The food and fluid will be mixed with barium so that it can be seen on the x-ray. Barium is white and has a chalk taste.

The whole procedure does not usually take longer than half an hour. The procedure is not painful, and there are no needles or tubes inserted.

You may be advised to drink plenty of water following the procedure (to reduce constipation), however this will depend on what is safe for you to drink.

Results of the x-ray may be explained to you on the day of your examination, by the Speech and Language Therapist (SLT). However, we may need to review the information before giving you any final recommendations or advice.

A detailed report is written by the SLT following the examination. We will send a copy of this report to yourself (unless otherwise requested), the person who referred you, your GP and any other professionals involved in your care. This may take up to 2 weeks.



If you have any further questions or would like more information, please contact the Adult Speech & Language Therapy Department on 01225 824333



Still image taken from a VF showing the structures of the head and neck

Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust
Combe Park, Bath BA1 3NG
01225 428331 www.ruh.nhs.uk

Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital. Email ruh-tr.PatientAdviceandLiaisonService@nhs.net or telephone 01225 825656.