

*If you have  
any questions,  
please ask  
the speech  
pathologist.*

## Modified Barium Swallow Study

A modified barium swallow study may also be called a video-fluoroscopic swallow study (VFSS) or a “cookie swallow” test. The swallow study is an X-ray exam that looks at how well food and liquid pass through your mouth and throat and down towards the stomach. The test shows how well the muscles work in your:

- Mouth
- Throat
- Upper esophagus

The results help us find the cause of your swallowing problems. Based on this, we can teach you:

- Ways to improve how you eat and swallow
- What exercises may help improve how you swallow

During the test, a series of video X-rays (fluoroscopy) are taken while you eat small amounts of food and liquid of different thicknesses. Video X-rays provide real-time images that show how you swallow. The amount of radiation used in this test is small and well within limits that are not harmful. The test is done in the Radiology Department and takes about 20 minutes.

### Before the test

#### ***Outpatients***

There is no special preparation for this test. You may have your normal diet and take routine medicines. It is important to wear your dentures if you use them when eating.

On the day of the test, plan to arrive 15 minutes before your test time. Be sure to bring:

- Your physician’s written order for the test if you received one.
- Photo ID
- Medical insurance information
- List of allergies
- List of current medicines
- Medicare card (Medicare patients)

Please come to the Outpatient Radiology Desk on the 4th floor of the Galter Pavilion at 201 East Huron Street.

Patient and visitor parking is in the garage at 222 East Huron Street. This is across from the hospital’s Feinberg and Galter pavilions.

For a discount, please bring your parking ticket with you. Have your ticket validated at one of the Customer Service Desks. These are located on the 1st and 2nd floor of the Feinberg and Galter pavilions.

### ***Inpatients***

If you are a patient in the hospital, your physician has ordered the swallow study based on the recommendation by the speech pathologist.

You will travel to the test on a cart or in a wheelchair. Be sure to wear your dentures if you use them when eating.

### **During the test**

When you arrive, tell the speech pathologist if you are breastfeeding or if it is possible that you are pregnant. You will be asked to eat and drink small amounts of food and liquid as video X-rays are taken. Liquids are given by spoon, syringe, and cup, and range in amounts from 1/3 teaspoon to normal-sized sips from a cup or straw. You will then be given spoonfuls of pudding and pieces of a cookie.

If you have trouble swallowing, you may be asked to:

- Swallow using special swallowing techniques.
- Drink thicker liquids.

Some of the food and liquids may contain barium. This allows the video X-ray to better show the movement of food and liquids as you swallow.

If you cannot swallow any liquid or food, you may spit it out.

### **After the test**

You may resume your normal activities and recommended diet after the test. Your test results will be explained to you right after the study. These are sent to your physician in 1 to 2 business days. Results can also be seen by Northwestern Medicine physicians right away in your medical record.