

Speech and Language Therapy Department Fibreoptic Endoscopic Evaluation of Swallowing (FEES) Information Leaflet

Why have I been referred for a FEES?

You have been referred for a FEES by your Speech and Language Therapist. This is because you have a swallowing problem, which needs further investigation.

The FEES uses a small camera (endoscope) which is passed down your nose and in to your throat, which enables the Speech and Language Therapist to examine your swallowing in detail. Sometimes the procedure is used to assess how easily you manage to swallow your saliva and sometimes different food and drinks are trialled to see how easy you find these to swallow.

What happens during the FEES?

The procedure will either take place on the ward or in the Ear, Nose and Throat Department. You can either be in bed or seated. You can remain in your wheelchair if appropriate and you will not have to change out of your clothes.

A small flexible telescope called an endoscope will be placed in to one nostril and moved through your nose just above your throat.

The procedure is conducted by two Speech and Language Therapists. One therapist will operate the endoscope and the other will give you instructions to follow or things to eat and drink. The procedure will probably last 10-20 minutes.

The Speech and Language Therapist will have a look at your throat and may also give you different consistencies to eat and drink which have been mixed with blue or green food colouring. The food colouring is used to make the food and liquid show up easily when you swallow it. The pictures from the endoscope will be recorded to enable the Speech and Language Therapist to review and analyse these at a later time.

We will assess your swallowing with a range of food and drink, including yogurt, banana and biscuit.

If you have any allergies to these foods or food colouring, please let us know before you attend the appointment.

Is the procedure painful? Is the procedure safe?

The passing of the telescope through the nose may cause mild to moderate discomfort. Sometimes there is a small amount of bleeding. Once the telescope is above the throat, any discomfort stops. At times local anaesthetic to the nose can be used, although this is rarely necessary. The procedure is extremely safe with a low risk of complications or side effects.

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The amount of food and drink you will be given is carefully controlled, however due to your swallowing difficulties there is a risk that some of the food/drink may go the 'wrong way' into your lungs. If this occurs appropriate medical attention will be arranged.

Can my relative/carer/friend accompany me to the procedure?

You are more than welcome to bring someone along to the procedure with you if you wish.

Can I eat before the procedure?

Unless you have been advised otherwise, you can eat and drink as normal before your appointment. If you are currently receiving your food/drink via a feeding tube you can take your feeds as normal up until your appointment. Your tube does not need to be removed for the procedure.

Do I need to bring anything with me to the FEES appointment?

Please bring with you any special cups or feeding utensils that you may use to help you with your eating and drinking. If there are specific foods that you find difficult and you would like to try, you can bring these with you. Remember to wear your dentures if you normally have these in when you eat and drink.

What happens afterwards?

You can return to the ward or go home immediately after the appointment. The Speech and Language Therapist will be able to give you some basic information and advice immediately after the procedure. It is likely that a further appointment will then be made with your own Speech and Language Therapist to discuss the results in more detail and provide further advice.

Students/teaching

The Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital is a teaching hospital and medical or therapy students may observe whilst you are being treated. If you would prefer not to have a student present, please inform your therapist when you attend the hospital. This will not affect your treatment in any way.

We may also use the recording of the FEES for teaching purposes; however it will not be possible to identify you from the recording.

Points of contact

If you have any questions about the procedure you can either speak to your ward or out-patient therapist, the staff when you attend for your FEES appointment, or you can call the Speech and Language Therapy department at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital on (01603 287117)

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