

What is a **F**iberoptic **E**ndoscopic **E**valuation of **S**wallowing?

What is a FEES Procedure?



The FEES procedure is a special test that will help your doctor and speech therapist learn why you are having difficulty swallowing. During the test, a thin, flexible tube, called a **laryngoscope**, is used that has a small camera on the end. This small scope is passed through the nose to the middle of the throat. Although you may be uncomfortable as the scope is inserted, it will take just a few seconds.

During the test, you will be given colored foods and liquids. As you chew and swallow, you may be asked to try different positions, such as turning your head or tucking in your chin, to see if these changes make it easier for you to swallow. During the procedure, the speech therapist will view and record pictures of your throat on a screen as you are swallowing.

Be sure to tell the speech therapist if you have any diet restrictions or food allergies before the test.

When is a FEES Test Needed?

A FEES test may be recommended if you:

- Have voice changes

- Are experiencing drooling
- Have repeated choking and coughing due to trouble swallowing liquid, food, and saliva
- Are at risk for swallowing fluids or foods into the lungs (known as **aspiration**)
- Have severe tiredness or fatigue during meals
- Have had severe weight loss due to swallowing problems
- Are on a mechanical breathing device (ventilator) or have had a **tracheotomy**, a surgical procedure in which an opening is made directly into the windpipe (trachea) in the neck to assist with breathing
- Are unable to have another type of swallowing study (called a **modified barium swallow**)

Who Should Not Have a FEES Procedure?

Patients with certain conditions or disorders should not undergo a FEES procedure, such as:

- A history of bleeding disorders
- Swallowing problems thought to be due to problems with the mouth or esophagus

- A mass in the nose or the part of the throat behind the mouth and nasal cavity (pharynx)
- Fracture of a facial bone or the base of the skull (basilar fracture)
- A history of becoming easily agitated

What are the Benefits of a FEES Test?

A FEES test will help your doctor and speech therapist to determine:

- Your ability to swallow secretions
- Whether foods or liquids go into the airway
- Whether you are able to eat safely
- Ways that will allow you to eat and swallow more easily
- The kinds of liquids and foods that are safest to include in your diet and those that should be avoided



Are There Any Risks During the Procedure?

As the test is performed, some patients may experience:

- Nosebleeds
- Sneezing or tearing of the eyes as the scope is passed

- Fainting due to stimulation of a certain nerve, called the vagus nerve
- A sudden tightening of the vocal cords (called **laryngospasm**)

What Happens After the Test?

Following the FEES test, your speech therapist will:

- Review and share the results of the test with your doctor.
- Include recommendations about what you should eat and ways to do so safely.



- Meet with you to review the test results and to give you a swallowing plan to help you eat and drink more easily and safely.

Are There Other Tests That May Be Suggested Instead?

A special test called a Modified Barium Swallow study is sometimes recommended instead of a FEES test. During this test, the patient swallows foods mixed with barium, so the swallowed food can be seen. The radiologist takes video x-rays showing the food as it moves from the mouth through the throat to the esophagus.

Source: Langmore et al. (1988) Fiberoptic endoscopic evaluation of swallowing safety: A new procedure. *Dysphagia*, 2, 216-219.

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