

Video Fluoroscopic Swallow Study in Children – A guide for parents



Welcome to McMaster Children's Hospital. This handout will help to answer your questions about swallow studies.

If you have other questions, please ask one of our staff and they would be glad to explain things to you.

What is a Video Fluoroscopic Swallow study (VFSS)?

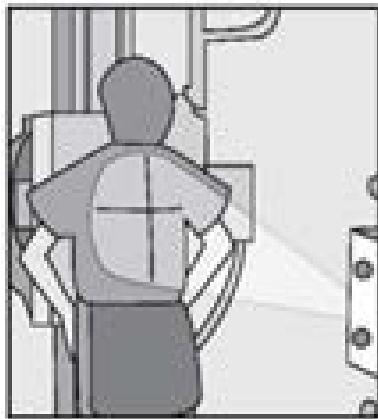
A Video Fluoroscopic Swallow Study (VFSS) is a test that uses x-rays to show what is happening inside your child's mouth and throat when they swallow. It is also used to see how changes in food consistency change swallowing function.

During the test your Occupational Therapist (OT) will give your child a series of drinks and foods based on some of your child's current diet and feeding goals. The food and drinks are mixed with a contrast (dye) so that it can be easily seen on an x-ray during swallowing.

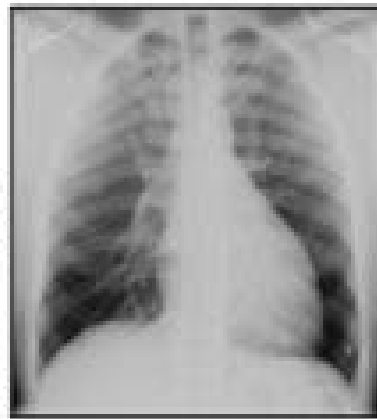
What is an x-ray?

An x-ray is a beam of radiation, similar to light, that can go through the body to create a picture.

The x-ray images are checked by the OT and a Radiologist.



X-ray machine

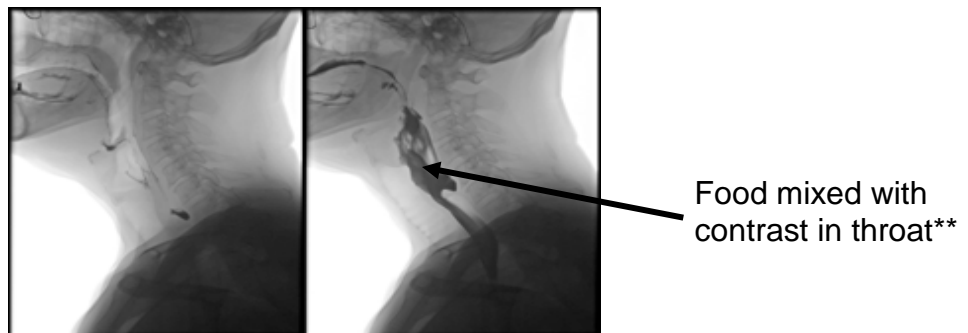


X-ray**

Where is the test done?

VFSS tests are done in a special x-ray room.

VFSS uses “real time” x-rays to show where the food goes when your child swallows it. This is similar to a video camera that takes “live” pictures compared to a camera that takes “still” pictures. The “live” or “real time” pictures using x-rays is called fluoroscopy. The x-rays are only on when your child is swallowing.



How much radiation is used?

All of us receive small amounts of radiation all the time – mainly from the sun and the soil. Scientists call this background radiation.

The amount of radiation used in x-ray films can be compared to the amount of background radiation we receive every day.

Source of Radiation	Days of Background Radiation
3-hour airline flight	1½ days
Chest x-ray	2 days
Swallow study	5 days

Will a lead shield be used?

Sometimes, a lead shield is used to protect parts of your child's body such as the testes, ovaries and thyroid gland. A lead shield may not be used if it covers an area the doctor needs to see on the x-ray.

Even though the amount of radiation received is low, the technologist will always protect your child as much as possible.



During the swallow study your therapist will try to recreate the position in which your child eats most often. This may mean your child is fed lying on their side, sitting up in a supportive seat or in their own wheelchair. If you are asked to stay with your child, you will need to wear a lead shield.

Please tell a member of the health care team if there is a chance of pregnancy.

What are the benefits of an x-ray?

Parents are often concerned with the risks involved with getting x-rays.

The doctor believes that the benefits of x-rays most often outweigh any small risk.

A Video Fluoroscopic Swallow Study allows your OT to see what is happening inside your child's mouth and throat before, during and after swallowing liquids and heavier foods. It allows your OT to see whether changes in food consistency improve your child's safety with eating and drinking. The OT will use this information to create a safe plan for home.



What should I do if I still have concerns?

Discuss any concerns with your OT and the doctor who ordered the test. If they cannot answer your question, please ask one of our technologists and they will be glad to explain things to you.

Location

Diagnostic Imaging is located on the 2nd floor, Yellow Section, 2S area of the McMaster Children's Hospital.

Phone: 905-521-2100, ext. 41484 (Press #3)



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