

# SWALLOWING SCREENING TEST FOR PATIENTS AFTER STROKE

## Stroke and Swallowing

Difficulty swallowing (known as dysphagia) is common after a stroke. About 50% of stroke survivors have some form of swallowing difficulty.

A stroke can affect the muscles used for swallowing food or liquid. This may include the muscles of the lips, tongue, and throat, leading to swallowing difficulty.

## Why is it Important to Have My Swallowing Tested?

A swallowing test can help to identify if you are likely to have swallowing difficulty.

Swallowing difficulty can lead to complications such as malnutrition, dehydration, and an increased risk of food or liquid going down the wrong way (aspiration). These complications can result in pneumonia, with a prolonged stay in hospital, or death.

**Detecting swallowing difficulties early improves patients' recovery and helps to ensure the best outcome for each patient.**

## What Do I Need To Do to Prepare For the Test?

Do not attempt to swallow anything, including water, food or medications until your swallowing screening test is completed. Families can help by not bringing in any food or drink until advised that it is okay by your health care team. Any additional instructions will be provided by your screener.

## What Happens During a Swallowing Test?

During the test, the screener will examine the muscles of your face, mouth, and throat. You may also be provided with a small amount of water to drink. Throughout the test, the screener will ask you to follow a series of simple instructions. It is important to follow the instructions closely. If you have any questions please ask the screener.

## What Happens After a Swallowing Test?

If you pass the swallowing screening test you can eat and drink while your progress is monitored for your safety and comfort.

If you fail the swallowing screening test you will be seen by a Speech-Language Pathologist for a "clinical swallowing evaluation". Until this evaluation is completed, it is recommended that you DO NOT attempt to swallow anything, including water, food or medications (unless your physician instructs otherwise).