

## Understanding Your Procedure

# Fiberoptic Endoscopic Evaluation of Swallowing

**IF YOU'RE HAVING DIFFICULTY SWALLOWING, your speech-language pathologist (or SLP) may need to perform an instrumental test to get more information about your swallow. One common instrumental test is called the Fiberoptic Endoscopic Evaluation of Swallowing (FEES). This test uses a camera to help your SLP see inside your throat to get a better idea of why you're having trouble swallowing.**

This test has many names. Some other names you may hear are:

- ▶ Endoscopy
- ▶ Flexible Endoscopic Evaluation of Swallowing
- ▶ Endoscopic Evaluation (or Examination) of Swallowing

## What happens during the test?

- ▶ You will sit comfortably as you do when you are eating a meal. Your SLP might numb your nose slightly to make the exam as comfortable as possible.
- ▶ Your SLP will slowly pass a very thin, flexible tube through your nose with a camera and light on the end. This is called an endoscope.
- ▶ Your SLP will hold the camera at the top of your throat and give you some things to eat and drink. The camera lets your SLP watch how the parts of your throat move when you swallow.
- ▶ Your SLP might also blow puffs of air into your throat to test how well you can feel things in your throat. This is called sensory testing.
- ▶ You will be able to talk and breathe comfortably the whole time. The vast majority of patients find having the tube in their throat while swallowing acceptable, even without numbing the nose.<sup>1</sup> The test will be recorded so it can be watched again later.

*Fiberoptic Endoscopic Evaluation  
of Swallowing*



## What happens after the test?

Your SLP will use the results of the test to decide what treatment will help your swallowing. You and your SLP will talk about what foods and drinks are safest, how to eat them, and if you need swallowing therapy.

## Why do I need a FEES?

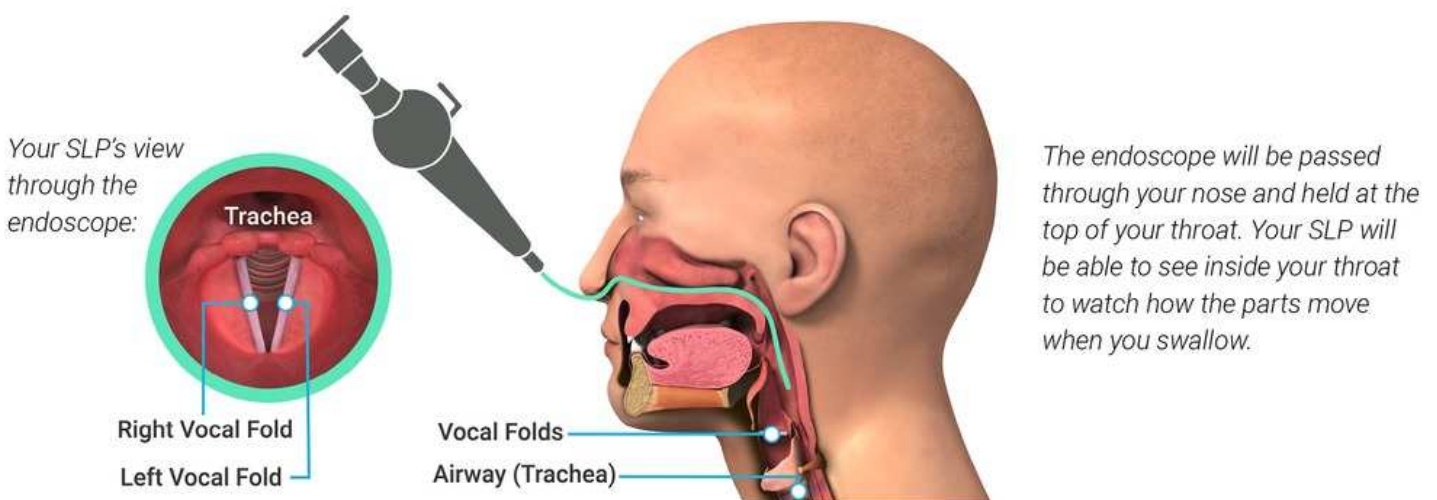
Your SLP may have already done a swallowing evaluation that involved examining your mouth, listening to your voice, observing your breathing, and assessing how you eat and drink. During this evaluation, your SLP can't see inside your mouth and throat to see how the structures in your throat are working. They also can't see if food, drink, or saliva are getting into your airway. The FEES lets your SLP see:

- ▶ If food and drink are getting into your airway instead of your stomach and what to do about it
- ▶ Which parts of your mouth and throat may not be working well
- ▶ If certain strategies and positions help you swallow better

## What are the advantages of the FEES?

No one instrumental test is better than another - they each have pluses and minuses. Your SLP will decide which test to start with. Some advantages of the FEES compared to other tests are:

- ▶ The test can be done bedside or at a doctor's office (you don't need to go to an x-ray department)
- ▶ There is no radiation exposure
- ▶ You don't need to eat or drink barium, which can sometimes cause constipation
- ▶ You can eat a typical meal during the test, instead of a specific or limited amount of food and liquid



### References:

1. Aviv JE, Kaplan ST, Thomson JE, Spitzer J, Diamond B, Close LG. The safety of Flexible Endoscopic Evaluation of Swallowing with Sensory Testing (FEESST): An analysis of 500 consecutive evaluations. *Dysphagia*. 2000;15: 39-44.