

# Dysphagia

## Symptoms and diagnosis

### What is dysphagia?

*Dysphagia* is a problem with swallowing and moving food and liquid from the mouth into the stomach. Some symptoms of dysphagia are:

- Coughing when eating or drinking, or soon after eating or drinking
- A wet, gurgly voice after drinking
- Feeling that food or pills stick in your throat

### What problems happen with dysphagia?

People who have dysphagia often have problems with *aspiration*. This is when liquid or food goes into the *airway* (the tube that carries air to and from the lungs). *Silent aspiration* is when liquid or food goes into the airway, but there is no coughing or choking.

### How is dysphagia diagnosed?

Your provider may ask you to have a barium swallow study to help diagnose your swallowing problems. This study may also be called a *video fluoroscopic swallow study*, or a *modified barium swallow study*. This study shows what happens to food or liquid when you swallow. It will help us understand your swallowing problems.

For the study:

- We will ask you to swallow a white liquid called *barium*. It will be thin or thick. We may ask you to swallow both kinds.
- A special kind of X-ray called *fluoroscopy* will create a video of your throat as you swallow. The barium makes it easier to see details on the X-ray.
- A speech pathologist and radiologist will study your X-ray video and give you the results. The provider who referred you for this study will also be able to see their report.



*A speech pathologist and a radiologist will study the X-ray video of your throat.*

You should not have any pain or discomfort from this test.

### Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Speech Pathology:  
206.597.3295