



HOSPITALS • RESEARCH • FOUNDATION

Esophageal Swallow Study with Speech or Occupational Therapy

What is an Esophageal Swallowing Study (ESS)?

An ESS is an X-ray test that takes pictures of your child's upper esophagus (the tube between the mouth and stomach). This test evaluates how your child swallows different thickness of liquids and solids.

What do I do before the test?

Your child should not have any food or drink 3 hours before the test. If your child eats or drinks during this time frame the test cannot be done and will be rescheduled.

How are the pictures taken?

- A Speech or Occupational Therapist (OT) will bring you and your child into a room for a short interview. They will ask questions about how your child tolerates different foods and drinks.
- Your child will then be taken into an X-ray room. Your child will sit in a chair that is specially made to help get the necessary pictures for the diagnosis.
- Your child will be given barium (a white fruit flavored liquid, which shows up well on X-ray pictures). The barium will be mixed to different thicknesses to help the radiologist and Speech/OT evaluate how your child eats or drinks.
- If your child has difficulty(s) with certain foods, please bring those with you.
- If your child prefers a certain type of nipple, cup or bottle please bring those with you.
- A special camera will be next to your child; the radiologist will use this to take pictures while your child swallows.

Who performs the test?

A pediatric Radiologist, a doctor specially trained in children's X-rays, takes the pictures and ensures that they are of good quality. A Speech or Occupational Therapist who is a person licensed and trained in evaluating children's swallowing function will work with the Radiologist to evaluate your child's ability to swallow.

Who looks at the pictures?

A pediatric Radiologist looks at all the pictures and then sends a report to your child's doctor. A separate report will be sent by the therapist who performs the study.

Are there risks?

Radiation in general is a risk. However, the amount of radiation used is the smallest amount possible to get the best pictures.

What happens after the test?

The Speech or Occupational Therapist will give you any special instructions and let you know when you can leave.

After the test, your child may eat or drink according to the recommendations made by your therapist and your child's doctor.

Your child may still have some white barium in their stool for 2 – 3 days.

Barium may cause constipation (no stools or hard stools). If your child has not had a bowel movement after 3 days, contact their doctor's office for advice.

When do I get results?

The Radiologist will review the pictures and send a report to your child's doctor. The Speech or Occupational Therapist will send a separate report to your child's doctor. Your child's doctor will contact you with the test results. Call your child's doctor if you have not heard any test results in 3 days.

You can also sign up for MyChart where you can access your results. Please see our Front Desk staff to sign up.



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How should I prepare my child?

Infants

Although you cannot explain the test to your baby, you can help him feel more secure during the test if you Bring a special blanket, toy or pacifier Comfort them with your presence and voice

Toddlers and pre-school age children

Young children can become anxious about having a test done, so the best time to talk with your child is right before the test On the day of the test, tell your child that they will be having some "pictures" taken, so their doctor can help them feel better Use simple words and be honest with your child Let your child know that you will stay with them as much as possible during the test When you come to the hospital, bring a favorite book, toy or blanket

School age children

School-age children have good imaginations and may frighten themselves by imagining something worse than the actual test. One or two days before the test, tell your child that they are going to the hospital to have some "pictures" taken of their body Use simple words and be honest with your child Let your child know that you will stay with them as much as possible during the test When you come to the hospital, bring along a favorite video game, book, toy or game

Photographs/Videos

The privacy of our patients and staff is important to us. No photographs or videos are allowed. Please turn off your cell phone before entering the x-ray exam room. Thank you for respecting the privacy of others.

NOTE: A parent/guardian will be allowed to accompany the child into the exam room; other arrangements should be made for siblings and other children. Women who are pregnant, or may be pregnant, will be asked to leave the exam room during the procedure. Please make sure that there is someone else available to accompany the child during the exam, if needed.

PATIENT NAME: _____

APPOINTMENT DATE: _____ TIME: _____

PATIENT PREPARATION/SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS: _____



Radiology Department at Arkansas Children's Hospital
(501) 364-4912 • Monday - Friday, 7:30 a.m. - 8 p.m.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room right away.
This is general information and is not specific medical advice for your child. Always consult your child's doctor or other healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns about the care or health of your child.