

Clinical Feeding and Swallowing Evaluation

What is a clinical feeding and swallowing evaluation?

We do a clinical feeding and swallowing evaluation (called “CSE”) to see if your child has trouble swallowing (called dysphagia). During the evaluation, the therapist will observe your child eating and drinking in their typical manner in a treatment room. The evaluation is done by a speech-language-pathologist (SLP), occupational therapist (OT) or physical therapist (PT). During the evaluation, the therapist will:

- Ask what concerns you have about your child’s feeding and swallowing.
- Ask about your child’s developmental and medical history.
- See how well your child is able to eat and swallow.
- Look at your child’s oral motor skills and chewing and the strength and movements of their muscles involved in swallowing.
- Look to see if there are signs for the risk of food or liquid going into the lungs.
- Observe your child to see how your child’s position, behavior and oral movements might affect their eating and drinking. Try changing the food, liquid, position or how your child is being fed to see if changes are helpful.
- Provide feeding and swallowing recommendations and suggest next steps.
- The SLP may try strategies and techniques that might help your child’s individual needs. The SLP will also teach you about swallowing.

How can I prepare my child for the evaluation?

- Bring your child hungry and willing to eat and participate.
- Do not give your child anything to eat or drink by mouth or by NG or G-tube feeds for 2 hours before the appointment.
- If your child has ND-tube or J-tube feedings, please turn off feedings 1 hour before the exam.
- If your child takes any medications, you can give those.
- If your child is on a ketogenic or Modified Atkins Diet, skip the meal or bolus prior to exam or turn off the continuous tube feed 2 hours before exam.
- Please arrive 15 minutes before the exam to allow time to get through check-in.

To Learn More

- Speech and Language Services
206-987-2104
- Ask your child’s healthcare provider
- seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

What should we bring with us?

- Bring familiar cups, bottles or any other special feeding items your child uses at home.
- Please bring examples of your child's familiar foods and drink, so we can observe what your child typically eats during a snack or meal.
- If your child has difficulty with certain foods, we encourage you to bring those as well. This will allow us to see what we can offer as support.
- Please bring therapy notes and therapist contact information if your child is currently receiving feeding and swallowing therapy
- If possible, bring a 3-day food diary. Include what your child has had to eat and drink, amount taken, time it was taken and any reaction your child had (such as throwing up). If your child is tube fed, include those times and amounts as well. You can download and use our 3-day record as an example at seattlechildrens.org/pdf/PE1378.pdf .

What are next steps?

The SLP will consult with the provider who referred your child about next steps. This may include:

- Trial of different food or liquid consistency, position or feeding method.
- A referral to another clinic specialist at Seattle Children's (such as pulmonary, gastroenterology, or otolaryngology).
- Follow-up feeding therapy.

Your child may need other exams such as:

- A video fluoroscopic swallowing study (called "VFSS"). In a VFSS, an SLP will work with your child to get an X-ray "movie" of their throat while they eat and drink. They will make recommendations right after the test, but you may need to check with your child's doctor before making changes to their diet.
- A fiber optic endoscopic evaluation of the swallow (called "FEES") study may also be needed. This is done with an ear, nose and throat (ENT) doctor and a speech-language pathologist. It involves putting a small tube (scope) through your child's nose to the back of their throat so we can watch their structures and muscle function while they swallow.