

What to Expect During your FEES® Appointment



What Is FEES®?

FEES stands for Fiberoptic Endoscopic Evaluation of Swallowing.

This is a test to investigate what happens when you swallow to make sure you do not have a swallowing disorder. Your clinician will be able to determine if food or liquid is going down the wrong way (into your airway) or getting stuck anywhere when you swallow. Your clinician may also be able to see if food or liquid has a tendency to come back up.

How does it work?

A very small, flexible tube will be inserted through your nose, allowing visualization of the inside of your throat. The tube is attached to a camera that will display the image on a computer screen. If you would like, you will be able to see the inside of your throat and watch the exam while it is taking place. You will be asked to eat/drink various textures of food/liquid that will be colored with a very small amount of blue food coloring. The clinician will come to your facility, so you do not need to go anywhere for this test.

Does it hurt?

This exam usually lasts 10-15 minutes or less and is not painful. There is a slight discomfort as the tube is inserted, but this feeling goes away once the tube is in place. Some have compared it to the feeling of getting water in your nose. We do not use any type of topical anesthesia for this exam, as we do not want to numb your throat. If the sensation in your throat is decreased, it may negatively impact your swallowing. Much research has been done on FEES, and most patients tolerate this test very well.

Why do I need to have a FEES®?

Your healthcare provider may have concerns regarding your ability to swallow food/liquid safely, especially if you have been diagnosed with pneumonia. Prior to your appointment, your provider who scheduled you for this exam should discuss the reasons for recommending the FEES.

Is there anything I need to do to prepare?

You do not need to do anything special to prepare for the FEES. You may eat and drink up until your appointment time. You will be asked to sit up in your chair, or we will elevate the head of your bed as much as you are able to tolerate. If you usually wear dentures when you eat and drink, you should have those in for the FEES. We simply request that you be available and ready to eat a little bit during your appointment. The clinician performing the exam will come to you.

Are there any possible complications with FEES®?

The risk for any complication is very minimal with FEES. The most likely complication is a sneezing episode. There is a very small risk for a minor nose bleed. Other possible, but highly unlikely, complications include: brief involuntary closure of the vocal folds in response to stimulation or a brief drop in blood pressure. Research has been completed using FEES for several decades with very low risk of complications.

When will I receive the results?

The clinician performing the exam and your primary provider will explain the results of the test as soon as the FEES is completed. Feel free to ask your clinician questions at any time before, during or after the exam.