For the Person About to Undergo Chemoradiation (NonOperative) Treatment for Head and Neck Cancer

Can Chemoradiation Affect My Swallowing? Yes. Swallowing problems, both during treatment and long term, are very common as a result of your treatments for head and neck cancer. The muscles of swallowing and chewing (jaw) often become weak and restricted in movement due to reduced use and development of fibrosis. Swallowing (speech) evaluation and therapy is important to limit the severity and prevent permanent swallowing problems. Ongoing therapy and follow-up will focus on improving the strength and movement of the muscles of swallowing and normalizing your diet.

How Often Will I See the Speech-Language Pathologist? You will need ongoing Speech evaluation for the next 3-5 years. We will try and see you when you are here for your Chemo treatments or in conjunction with other appointments. The protocol is as follows:

First year:
- Before treatment for baseline assessment, education, and discussion of swallowing plan of care
- Week 2 of treatment to review or modify your exercise regimen
- Half-way through your treatment (approximately week 3 or 4)
- Telephone or clinic follow-up as needed during the remainder of your treatment
- Swallowing assessment and development of post-treatment rehabilitation plan approximately 4-6 weeks following completion of XRT
- Return therapy appointment as needed

Years 2-5:
- Visits yearly or as needed.

Speech-Language Pathologist:
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Prophylactic Swallowing Exercise During Chemoradiation
Developed by Paula A. Sullivan, MS., CCC-SLP, BRS-S

Your speech pathologist will check which exercise(s) you should be performing based on the location of your cancer as well the exercise regimen (repetitions, frequency, etc.). Please keep in mind that exercises will be individualized and modified according to you depending upon your ability to perform them and findings of your swallowing assessments because your swallowing ability can vary from day to day as a result of your specific reaction to treatment and changes to your swallowing mechanism.

_____ 1. YAWN: At the “height” of the yawn – hold the yawn for 3-5 seconds (5 is best!).
   Repeat__________ Frequency__________

   **Tips for Yawning:** Do this exercise when you naturally yawn. Open your mouth as wide as you can and inhale a large amount of air to the back of your throat. You may need to depress the tip of your tongue into the floor of your mouth. Experiment to see what makes you yawn.

_____ 2. GARGLE: Hold the gargle for 3-5 seconds (5 is best!). Repeat_____Frequency_____

   Do NOT gargle with mouthwash. Rather, you can use water, carbonated water or the water and baking soda recipe. Do NOT do this exercise after you gargle with your Magic Mouth Wash as this can numb your throat.

_____ 3. TONGUE BASE RETRACTION: Pull the back of your tongue as far back as you can. Pretend you are trying to scratch the back wall of your throat with the back of your tongue. Hold for _____seconds.
   Repeat__________ Frequency__________

_____ 4. HARD/EFFORTFUL SWALLOW: Swallow HARD every time you swallow your saliva, food, or liquid.

_____ 5. MASAKO EXERCISE: Swallow while keeping your tongue between your teeth/gums.

   Repeat__________ Frequency __________

   **Tips:** - Your will first need to wet/moisten your mouth. You may need to gently bite down on your tongue (for anchoring) to assist you in swallowing. - The further you are able to stick your tongue out of your mouth during the swallow, the harder the exercise.

_____ 6. SHAKER EXERCISE

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**Position:** Lie on your back with your face looking at the ceiling. Do NOT use a pillow. Make sure your shoulders remain on/touching the surface throughout the exercise.

**Exercises:**

1. Flex your neck by (attempting to) touching your chin to your chest. Mouth should remain closed with a relaxed jaw. **Hold this for 1-minute/60 seconds. Do this exercise 3 times total at one time resting one minute between each exercise.**

2. Repeat the previous exercise (neck flexion) without holding using a fluid motion. Flex your neck and touch your chin to your chest. **Repeat this exercise 30 times.**

**Repeat exercises One **AND** Two completely, three (3) times daily.**

**Tips:** It is important that you attempt the recommended position as this position provides the greatest improvements in swallowing. If you cannot lie in the recommended position, try the following options:

1. Lie in the lowest position of a reclining chair or a lawn chair (lounge).
2. If you have a foam wedge pillow – use that during the exercise.

_____7. **MENDELSON MANEUVER:** Swallow normally. Feel the larynx (i.e., voice box, Adams apple) lift during the swallow. On the next swallow, feel your larynx (voice box) elevating and hold it up with your neck muscles. Do not try to lift the larynx early. Let the larynx lift normally and then hold it up so that it does not drop for ____ seconds. Complete the swallow. Repeat _____ Frequency _____

_____8. **JAW STRETCH:** Open your mouth as wide as you can and hold to a count of _____. Repeat_________ Frequency_________

_____9. **ROTARY JAW MOVEMENT:**