



Swallowing exercises: Mendelsohn laryngeal hold (pharyngeal strengthening)

This leaflet is for patients who are experiencing swallowing difficulties and have been advised to complete the Mendelsohn laryngeal hold swallowing exercise for rehabilitation. This exercise should only be used by the individual named below and under guidance from your speech and language therapist.

Patient name: _____

Why do I need to do this exercise?

Dysphagia can make it difficult to eat, drink and take your medication, and you may be at risk of food, fluids or saliva 'going down the wrong way'. If this happens, it can result in choking and/or chest infections known as 'aspiration pneumonia'. The below exercise may help to improve your swallowing.

The exercise

When you swallow, your voice box (larynx) should come up and tilt forward to protect your airway from food and drink 'going the wrong way'. This exercise is designed to help you hold your voice box up as you swallow and lengthen the period of time your airway is protected. It also helps to open the valve at the entrance to the food pipe (oesophagus) for food and drink to get to your stomach. You should feel effort when doing this exercise, but **STOP** if you experience any pain. Please raise any concerns you have with your speech and language therapist or doctor.

Please complete ___ times per day for ___ weeks.

How to complete the 'Mendelsohn laryngeal hold' exercise:

- A) Put your fingers gently on your voice box or 'Adam's apple'. Now swallow and feel how your Adam's apple moves up and down as you do so.
- B) Swallow again and this time hold up your voice box for a few second with your throat muscles. You should not manually push against your voice box with your fingers to do this. However, you may want to gently touch it for some tactile feedback.
- C) This exercise should be completed with saliva only. You should not have any food or drink in your mouth.

Contact details:

Speech and Language Therapy Department – 0118 322 5205 Monday to Friday.
Email: rbft.speechlanguage@nhs.net

Week 1	Reps
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	
Sunday	

Week 2	Reps
Monday	
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Week 3	Reps
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Week 4	Reps
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Week 5	Reps
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Week 6	Reps
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Further information

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Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

Speech & Language Therapy, May 2026. Next review due: May 2028.