



Swallowing exercises: Effortful swallow (pharyngeal strengthening)

This leaflet is for patients who are experiencing swallowing difficulties and have been advised to complete the effortful 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 has may help to improve your swallowing.

The exercise

This swallow technique is designed to help strengthen the throat muscles that squeeze the food down into your oesophagus (food pipe). This should help reduce the amount of residue in your throat after swallowing. 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 'effortful swallow':

- A) When you are ready to swallow your saliva, squeeze your tongue against the roof of your mouth.
- B) As you swallow squeeze all the muscles in your throat. Imagine you are trying to swallow a large tablet or a golf ball.
- C) If it has been recommended by your speech and language therapist, this exercise may be trialled when eating and drinking.

Contact details:

Speech and Language Therapy Department – 0118 322 5205 Monday to Friday.
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To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

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

Speech & Language Therapy, September 2025. Next review due: September 2027

Week 1	Reps
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	
Sunday	

Week 2	Reps
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	
Sunday	

Week 3	Reps
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
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Saturday	
Sunday	

Week 4	Reps
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	
Sunday	

Week 5	Reps
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	
Sunday	

Week 6	Reps
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
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