

Feeding Study



Department of Radiology

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What is a feeding study?

A feeding study is a test that shows what happens to food as it is swallowed. A series of X-ray images is taken as food moves from the mouth into the throat and down into the stomach. The images will show if there are problems at any stage. It helps decide on how to treat the swallowing difficulty.

How is it done?

Soft tissues, unlike bone, do not show up on an X-ray. A substance called “barium” is added to your child’s food so that it can be seen on the x-ray video. Barium is a chalky substance that shows up well on the X-ray. As the food moves down into the stomach, it coats the body tissues along the way.

What happens during the test?

The test is done in the Radiology Department. The radiologist, technologist, occupational therapist (OT), and/or speech language pathologist (SLP) work together with the parents. The therapist(s) will help the child sit in a special chair (see picture) as they would normally sit when eating. The parent or therapist will offer the child food. The study is recorded as the food or drink is being swallowed.

The therapist will try as much as possible to have the feeding study show what is happening at home with your child. You may be asked to bring foods, bottles and cups from home that your child normally uses. This will be discussed with you.

The therapist may change the child’s position or alter the texture of the food or liquids to see if this improves the child’s swallowing ability.

Most children like to have their parent with them to explain what they see and hear in the unfamiliar room.



When will you find out about the results?

The team doing the study will look at the recording and images right away. They will tell you what they have found. The radiologist will send a formal report to the health professional that requested the study. The therapist will work with other team members, such as a dietician, nurse or doctor to provide you with suggestions on how to help your child when eating and drinking. You will receive a copy of the written report outlining these suggestions.

A note about the hospital

The hospital is a busy place. There is pay parking on site but it may be difficult to find a space. You need to register at the Admitting Desk located just inside the main entrance to BC Children’s Hospital before coming to the Radiology Department. Please make sure you leave enough time to get to your appointment.

At Children’s & Women’s Health Centre of British Columbia we believe parents are partners on the health care team. We want you to be as informed as possible. This brochure will answer some of your questions. Please ask about things you do not understand and share your concerns.

If you have any questions, please call : 604-875-2601