

Swallowing Exercises

The type of cancer you have and the treatment you are having can cause long term swallowing difficulties. These difficulties can lead to further health complications, such as poor nutrition. In order to maintain your swallowing ability and minimise the possibility of long term swallowing problems, try to complete the following exercise routine three times a day throughout your treatment, and up to 6 months after your treatment has finished. Following this, your Speech-language Therapist will provide guidance regarding any ongoing need for swallowing exercises.

- € **Maximum Jaw Stretch.** Open your mouth as wide as possible (try to get 3 fingers vertically between your teeth). Hold that stretch for 20-30 seconds. Relax.
 - Repeat 3 times.
- € **Side to side jaw stretch.** Stretch your jaw to the right and then to the left repeatedly for 30 seconds.
- € **Tongue stretch and strengthen.**
 - Hold each stretch for 20-30 seconds
 - Protrude your tongue as far out as you can
 - Move your tongue to the left, then to the right as far as it will go
 - Retract your tongue as if gargling or making a 'k' sound (tongue tip should be flat on floor of mouth)
 - Gargle with salt and baking soda or plain water for 20-30 seconds.
- € **Effortful swallow.** Swallow with greater effort- ("up and over")
 - Repeat 3 times.
- € **Swallow strengthening.** Hold the tip of your tongue between your teeth and keep it there while you swallow.
 - Repeat 3 times.
- € **Swallow and hold.** Try to hold your Adam's apple up for as long as possible while swallowing.
 - Repeat 3 times with a 30 second rest in between.

It is also important to continue eating and drinking as much as you can tolerate throughout your treatment. Please speak to your team if you are having difficulties with managing your food. Keep using the swallowing muscles to maintain their strength and flexibility.

Speech, language & voice therapy, ORL Service