

Yale Swallow Protocol

Step 1. Exclusion Criteria

___ Protocol Deferred: NO risk factors for aspiration.

Protocol deferred if any YES answer to the following criteria:

- Y/N Unable to remain alert for testing
- Y/N No thin liquids due to pre-existing dysphagia
- Y/N Head of bed restrictions < 30°
- Y/N Tracheotomy tube present
- Y/N Nil per os order for medical/surgical reason

Continue with screening only if ALL criteria checked "NO"

If "YES"

Keep nil per os & consider FEES/VFSS

Step 1a. Perform Brief Cognitive Screen:

- ___ What is your name? ___ Open your mouth
- ___ Where are you right now? ___ Stick out your tongue
- ___ What year is it? ___ Smile

(If disoriented there is an increased odds of aspiration risk.)

Step 1b. Oral Mechanism Evaluation:

- A. Labial closure
- B. Lingual range of motion
- C. Facial symmetry (smile/pucker)

(Altered lingual mobility increases odds of aspiration risk.)

Clinical Judgement to Continue to Step 2

Step 2. 3 Ounce Water Swallow Challenge

- A. Sit patient upright at 80-90° (or as high as tolerated > 30°)
- B. Ask patient to drink entire 3 oz (90 cc) of water from a cup or with a straw, in sequential swallows, and slow & steady but without stopping
- C. Emphasize to patient, "Slow and steady swallowing - **WITHOUT STOPPING.**"

Note: Cup or straw can be held by staff or patient.
If patient stops & starts due to misunderstanding instructions give a 2nd try.

Step 3. Pass/Fail Criteria

PASS: Complete & uninterrupted drinking of all 3 oz of water and with no overt signs of aspiration (coughing or choking) during or immediately after completion.

FAIL: Interrupted drinking, coughing, or choking during or immediately after completion of drinking

Keep nil per os

Either re-screen in 24 hours or FEES/VFSS