

StrokeSmart™

LIFESTYLE | RECOVERY | RESEARCH | PREVENTION

SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER 2005



YOUNG FACES OF SURVIVAL

TIP THE SCALES IN YOUR FAVOR
WHEN IT'S HARD TO SWALLOW
FINDING THE RIGHT CRUISE



National Stroke Association

A PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL STROKE ASSOCIATION

VitalStim®
Therapy
demonstrates
a 95%
success rate!
(See Inside)



When It's Hard to Swallow

What is it?

BY M.B. NELSON WITH
JAN GROSS, PhD ARNP-S

Dysphagia (dis-fay-ja):
a problem swallowing food or drinks.

WHILE WE RARELY THINK ABOUT IT, swallowing is actually a process of several complex movements of the tongue, mouth and throat. Almost one-third of stroke patients find it difficult to chew and swallow because of the loss of muscle control on one side of the body, including the muscles of the tongue and throat. The good news is that this difficulty swallowing, called dysphagia, usually goes away within two to four weeks in about 80% of stroke patients with this problem.

For those who have long-term problems, a swallowing test can determine which liquids, pureed foods, and solid foods are easiest to swallow. The results of these tests are used to create a therapy program and special diet for each person's specific

chewing or swallowing problems. Liquids are usually more difficult to control and swallow if the tongue, lips and jaw do not work together properly. A well-designed swallowing program helps ensure patients get plenty of nutritious foods and vital fluids.

Individualized eating techniques and tips include:

- Specific body positions during meals can help you swallow. In some cases, changing the body or head position may make up for the weak or damaged area that is causing the swallowing problem. Sitting upright in a chair also helps. If you need help to eat, have a caregiver sit in front of you.
- Be aware of the amount of food being swallowed and whether cold or warm food is easier to swallow.
- Never eat in a hurry. Limit distractions, eat in a quiet room, and don't talk until after you have swallowed.

■ A good blender can help prepare food and create the right consistency. Eating enjoyment doesn't have to be sacrificed; using seasoning can improve taste and pleasure. Fruit juices, sauces and gravies can add a lot of flavor to foods.

■ Brushing teeth or dentures, gums, and tongue and keeping the mouth

RESOURCES

Becky Dorner & Associates
www.beckydorner.com
1-800-342-0285
dysphagia resources

InterNutra
www.internutra.com
1-800-866-7757
frozen, pre-packaged
line of pureed foods

Hormel Health Labs
www.hormelhealthlabs.com
PHONE: 1-800-866-7757
products for patients with dysphagia

Ed, Age 59

DIAGNOSIS:
Stroke, received PEG Tube

FACILITY:
Armstrong County Hospital,
Kittanning, PA

TREATMENT:
VitalStim® Therapy

RESULT:
PEG Tube removed;
normal diet

but for a swallow

Based on clinical electrical stimulation

Proven safe

Remarkably successful in real-world use

Better - and faster - results than traditional therapy

**A new therapy.
A revived hope.**

Proven treatment for people with dysphagia

VitalStim® Therapy. The only neuromuscular electrical stimulation cleared by the FDA to treat oropharyngeal dysphagia.

Across the country, Speech Language Pathologists who use VitalStim® Therapy report unheard of successes.

At long last, a proven treatment is holding out the promise of relief for dysphagia sufferers. And delivering hope for a lasting solution. To learn more call 1-800-506-1130 or visit our website, vitalstimtherapy.com.

**VITALSTIM®
THERAPY**
BY CHATTANOOGA GROUP
1-800-506-1130
vitalstimtherapy.com

© 2012 Envue Medical, LP. 11788 3/0912

moist are essential. This minimizes problems with food in the mouth that is not swallowed and prevents germs from growing. Use a soft toothbrush (manual or electric) and mouthwashes without alcohol in them. Applying Vaseline or lanolin to the lips also helps fight dry-mouth.

■ Safe eating utensils can help make eating more comfortable. Surprisingly, drinking through a straw can actually increase the difficulty of swallowing fluids. Ask your health care provider about a specially designed cup with a cutout for the nose that can make drinking easier. There is no need to tilt the head back. Shallow bowls or spoons are other options. (See the resource box for product manufacturers.)

Dysphagia can be life threatening if poorly swallowed food blocks the airway in the throat. Food or liquids that leak into the lungs (“go down the wrong pipe”) can cause pneumonia and a reluctance to swallow can lead to malnutrition. So, if swallowing food or drink is a problem for you, talk to your health care provider to find the right solution.

NEWS IN THE MAKING


HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital in Huntsville, Alabama, is participating in a study of VitalStim Therapy, a new, FDA-approved therapy for stroke patients with dysphagia.

VitalStim Therapy uses small electrical currents to stimulate the muscles used for swallowing. At the same time, trained specialists help patients “re-educate” their muscles through rehabilitation therapy.

Highlights of this study include:

- A success rate of over 95% with post-stroke patients
- Success was most likely when VitalStim Therapy began within five to seven days post-stroke
- Oral feeding in patients who could not eat or drink resumed in two to three weeks after beginning the therapy, a 75-95% reduction in recovery time
- Fewer hospitalized patients have required feeding tubes
- Patients have left the hospital sooner

To learn more about this therapy option, visit www.vitalstimtherapy.com or call 1-800-506-1130 for urgent requests. Contact HealthSouth by calling 888-734-2248.



Reviving hope
for the simple
pleasures.

JOHNNY, AGE 51

DIAGNOSIS: Stroke; received feeding tube

FACILITY: HealthSouth Chattanooga

Rehabilitation Hospital, Chattanooga, TN

TREATMENT: VitalStim® Therapy, 20 sessions

RESULT: feeding tube removed; normal diet

For those with dysphagia, a difficulty in swallowing, the pleasure of a simple meal is a thing of the past. But there is hope.

This FDA-cleared therapy uses neuromuscular electrical stimulation to revive and re-train the muscles involved in swallowing. For those affected by dysphagia, VitalStim® may restore normal swallowing function.

VitalStim® therapy is available at your local HealthSouth hospital.

For more information, call 1-888-REHAB-4-U or visit healthsouth.com.

HEALTHSOUTH®

VITALSTIM®
THERAPY
BY CHATTANOOGA GROUP