

Swallowing Therapy: Tongue base strengthening exercises (c)

This leaflet is for patients experiencing swallowing difficulties and explains an exercise technique designed to strengthen the base of your tongue to help with swallowing control.

What is a tongue base strengthening exercise?

It is a technique to exercise the base of your tongue in order to control the food and fluid during the swallow. The back of the tongue contacts with the back of the throat and squeezes food and drink down into the oesophagus (gullet). This swallow technique is designed to strengthen the base of tongue and improve this action. It also helps to strengthen the muscles in your throat used for swallowing.

How to do the tongue base strengthening exercise

1. Take a breath and hold your breath tightly.
2. Keep your tongue in contact with the roof of your mouth as tightly as you can, keep squeezing your throat as you swallow, then forcibly exhale (breathe out).
3. Repeat 25 times per day, 6 out of 7 days per week for at least five weeks.
4. If you are doing this exercise without food or drink, you will not be able to do 25 consecutive swallows, so aim to do 5 at any one time.

Please note: If you find it too difficult to keep your tongue in tight contact with the roof of your mouth, you can practice this exercise by just swallowing as hard as you can.

You may find it helpful to use the chart on the next page to record your exercises and document your progress.

Contact us

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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.

RBFT Speech & Language Therapy, January 2023
Next review due: January 2025

Progress chart

Week 1	5 reps	5 reps	5 reps	5 reps	5 reps	Week 2	5 reps	5 reps	5 reps	5 reps	5 reps
Monday						Monday					
Tuesday						Tuesday					
Wednesday						Wednesday					
Thursday						Thursday					
Friday						Friday					
Saturday						Saturday					
Sunday	rest day					Sunday	rest day				
Week 3	5 reps	5 reps	5 reps	5 reps	5 reps	Week 4	5 reps	5 reps	5 reps	5 reps	5 reps
Monday						Monday					
Tuesday						Tuesday					
Wednesday						Wednesday					
Thursday						Thursday					
Friday						Friday					
Saturday						Saturday					
Sunday	rest day					Sunday	rest day				
Week 5	5 reps	5 reps	5 reps	5 reps	5 reps	Week 6		5 reps	5 reps	5 reps	5 reps
Monday						Monday					
Tuesday						Tuesday					
Wednesday						Wednesday					
Thursday						Thursday					
Friday						Friday					
Saturday						Saturday					
Sunday	rest day					Sunday	rest day				

Compassionate

Aspirational

Resourceful

Excellent