

Ampcare effective swallowing protocol: treatment for oropharyngeal dysphagia in adults

What is it?

Ampcare's effective swallowing protocol is a form of therapy that delivers a low-level electrical current (known as transcutaneous neuromuscular electrical stimulation) through the skin to the muscles in the neck, most usually used on adults presenting with swallowing difficulties after a stroke. The aim of treatment is to strengthen the muscles involved in swallowing by increasing movement, stimulating muscle contractions and re-educating the muscles.

How long does treatment last?

There are two programmes you may be offered, depending on your need.

- Four-week programme: five days a week, Monday to Friday, sessions last 30-45 minutes.
- Six-week programme: three days per week, Monday to Friday, sessions last 30-45 minutes. This programme has four days of self-directed swallowing exercises alongside this.

What can I expect?

Two pie shaped electrodes will be placed on your skin under your chin, overlying specific muscles. The stimulation to the electrodes will be increased to a therapeutic intensity level and your therapist will ask you to perform specific exercises during the treatment sessions. At the end of the treatment period, you and/or your carer will be asked to fill in some brief questions about your treatment.

Do I have to have this treatment?

No. It is up to you whether you would like to receive this therapy. If you do, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You are still free to withdraw from the treatment at any time and without giving a reason. If you decide not to take part or to withdraw at any time, it will not affect the standard of care you receive.

Is there any condition that would exclude me from having this treatment?

Current research and guidelines show that this treatment is only suitable for people with swallow difficulties after a stroke. This treatment is not appropriate for patients who may be pregnant, those with implanted electronic devices such as pacemakers or those with any open wounds/tumours/burns in the neck area. The treatment protocol is also not appropriate for those with allergies to latex or adhesives.

Your usual hospital doctor and your GP will be informed that you are having this treatment, with your consent. There may be special circumstances in which your hospital doctor feels you should not be having this intervention.

What are the alternatives for treatment?

If you do not want to undergo this treatment and you have difficulties swallowing, you will be offered treatment by our speech and language therapy service.

If you have private medical insurance, you should check with them before agreeing to have this treatment. You will need to do this to ensure that your medical insurance will not be affected.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The aim of treatment is to improve your ability to eat and drink safely, however this is not a guaranteed outcome and there may be no improvement in your condition. This is why we need to collect information about the outcomes of this treatment. The information we get will help improve the future treatment of many people with swallowing difficulties.

What are the potential risks and side effects?

There have been no known side effects in over 5,800 documented treatments with this intervention method in the United States. Occasionally minor discomfort has been reported during stimulation. If this occurs, your therapist will adjust the placement of the electrodes and/or current intensity to your comfort level.

Sources of information

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) have reviewed the treatment transcutaneous neuromuscular electrical stimulation for oropharyngeal dysphagia (IP490). More information can also be found on www.swallowtherapy.com

Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the patient experience team on 0300 131 4784 or esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net

Hand hygiene

The trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for colleague use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

If you require any of the trust leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department.

Tel: 0300 131 4434 Email: esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:
Hilary Otter, Clinical Lead Speech and Language Therapist for Community Rehabilitation
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The directorate group that have agreed this patient information leaflet:
CHIC IPR

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