

## Speech & Language Therapy

# Swallowing exercises for head and neck patients

Radiotherapy and chemotherapy can affect your eating and drinking in a number of ways. One of the biggest impacts is on the muscles you use for swallowing, and how well they work.

Radiotherapy can make the muscles very tight and 'woody', and once this happens it can be very difficult to reverse. This may lead to long term swallowing problems and limit the texture and amount of food you can manage.

The aim of these exercises is to keep your muscles moving throughout treatment, to maintain their strength and flexibility. The following exercises target the floor of mouth muscles, jaw muscles, the voice box and the base of tongue and throat muscles, all of which impact on the swallow sequence.

We recommend you do a set of 10 repetitions of each exercise 3 times per day. It should take about 10 minutes to complete all the exercises.

Go gently. You should feel a pull, but no pain. Take short breaks or sips of water in-between exercises if you need to.

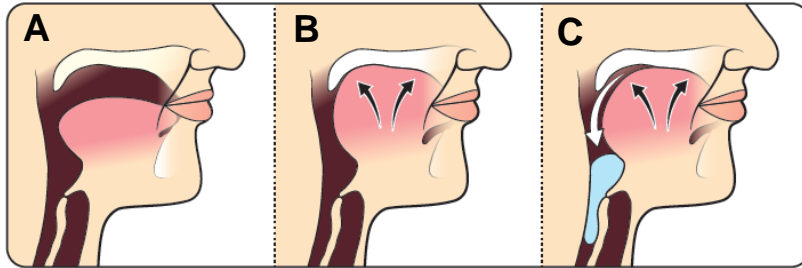
If there is any pain, stop. Carrying out some exercises shortly after taking your pain medications may help with this.



## Patient Information

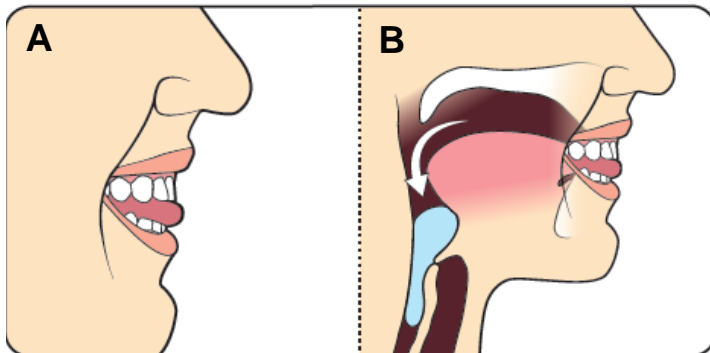
If you are having any difficulties with the exercises, speak to your Speech and Language Therapist.

### The Effortful Swallow - to strengthen your throat muscles



- A. Start with your tongue at rest.
- B. Press your tongue against the roof of your mouth as hard as you can.
- C. Swallow as hard as you can.

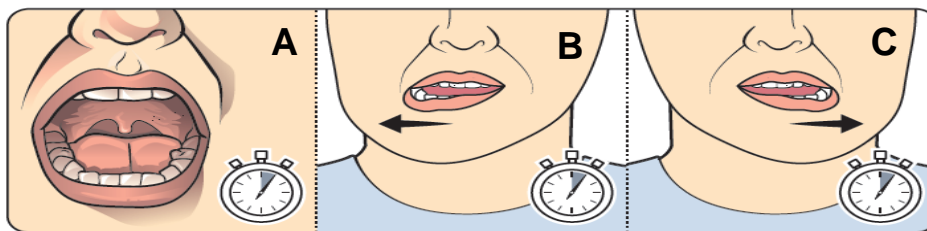
### The Masako Technique - to strengthen your throat muscles



- A. Stick out the tip of your tongue; hold it between your teeth or lips.
- B. Keeping your tongue in place, try to swallow your spit.

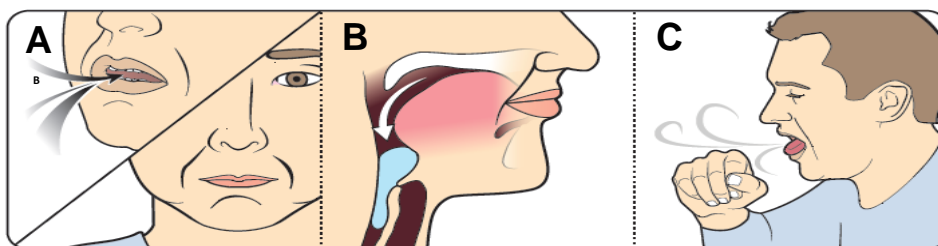
## Patient Information

### Range of motion exercise - to stretch your jaw muscles



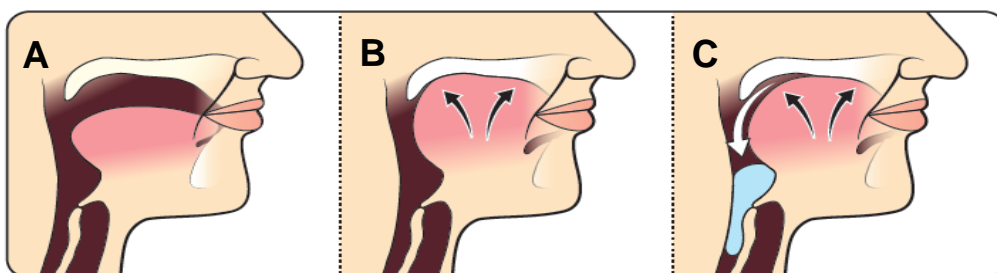
- A. Open your mouth as big as you can. Hold for 5 seconds.
- B. Move your jaw to the right. Hold for 5 seconds.
- C. Move your jaw to the left. Hold for 5 seconds.

### The Supraglottic Swallow - to protect your airway



- A. Take a breath and hold it.
- B. Swallow.
- C. Then cough out as strong as possible.

### The Mendelsohn Exercise - to strengthen your floor of mouth muscles



- A. Start with your tongue at rest.
- B. Press your tongue against the roof of your mouth and swallow.
- C. Before letting go, squeeze your floor of mouth & throat muscles to hold the Adam's apple up for 3 seconds.

## Patient Information

Please contact Speech & Language Therapy on 024 7696 6449 if you have any questions.

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