Modified Barium Swallow (MBS)

About the test
A modified barium swallow (MBS) is a special x-ray that records a video of your mouth, throat, and how you swallow. It allows the doctor, called the radiologist, and the swallowing specialist, called the speech-language pathologist (SLP), to identify why you have trouble swallowing. The SLP is a professional who specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of swallowing disorders and communication problems.

This test will help your health care team plan what type of foods and liquids are the easiest and safest for you to eat. The SLP will also identify any changes in position that may help you with swallowing.

Before the test
• Tell the doctor or radiologist if you are pregnant, or think you may be pregnant before an x-ray is taken.

During the test
• A technologist will take you to the x-ray room. You will sit in a special chair next to the x-ray machine.
• The SLP will give you different foods and liquids to chew and swallow. The foods will be covered with barium, a bland-tasting liquid or pudding-like material. Barium allows images of your mouth and throat to be seen on an x-ray while you swallow.
• The SLP will tell you when to take a drink or chew and swallow while the radiologist takes x-rays.
• During the test, you may be asked to turn your head, sit back, hold your breath, cough, or take small bites of food. These actions will help identify the easiest and safest ways for you to swallow.
• Usually, you will drink a liquid, followed by eating pudding and a cookie. Other foods or liquids may be tried, depending on your swallowing problem.

Day of the test
• Please arrive 20 minutes before your appointment time.
• Bring with you a list of your current medicines, your insurance card, and a photo ID.
After the tests

- The radiologist and the SLP will review the results of the test to determine if and why you have problems with your swallowing.
- The SLP will discuss the results with you as well as with your doctor.
- The SLP will provide you with an individual swallowing plan and any special materials you may need to assist you with improving your swallow.
- You may have chalky and light colored bowel movements for 1 to 3 days after the test. Follow your doctor’s order to take either a laxative or a cleansing enema if needed.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call 614-293-4333. Radiology Scheduling will connect you to a qualified staff member who will answer your questions.