

HealthSouth Lakeshore VitalStim® Therapy



Dysphagia affects approximately 15 million people in the U.S. and nearly 60,000 people die each year from complications associated with swallowing disorders. Many develop serious complications and must endure additional medical procedures. Studies show almost 75% of stroke survivors develop some form of dysphagia.

What is VitalStim® Therapy?

VitalStim Therapy is used in the treatment of swallowing disorders. It is an active rehabilitation program, combining the physiological benefits of neuromuscular electrical stimulation and a volitional therapeutic program. Using VitalStim to activate key swallowing muscles allows clinicians to implement an active regimen of therapy to create or re-learn functional muscle-use patterns necessary for swallowing. Across the country, speech therapists who use VitalStim Therapy report unheard-of successes, especially among patients for whom all traditional treatments have failed.

How does VitalStim® work?

VitalStim is performed by a licensed speech therapist who has been trained and certified. The treatment consists of two to five sessions per week with treatments scheduled according to each patient's needs. VitalStim Therapy uses a small current, passing it through external electrodes on the anterior neck, to stimulate inactive or atrophied swallowing muscles.

- **Step 1.** A carefully calibrated current is delivered by specially designed electrodes
- **Step 2.** The current stimulates the peripheral motor nerves
- **Step 3.** A contraction in the muscles responsible for normal swallowing is elicited
- **Step 4.** Result: Improved quality of muscle contraction and improved swallow function
- **Step 5.** With repeated therapy, muscles are re-educated

Conditions contributing to dysphagia:

- CVA (especially brainstem)/TIA
- Brain injury (traumatic, anoxic)
- Parkinson's disease
- ALS
- Multiple sclerosis
- Brain tumor
- Malignancy (especially head/neck)
- Scarring secondary to radiation or surgery
- Intubation trauma
- Myopathies
- Post-polio syndrome
- Cerebral palsy
- Alzheimer's/dementia
- S/P CABG with vagal nerve involvement
- General debility
- Other neurological disorders/motor neuron diseases

Benefits of treatment:

- Decrease the severity of dysphagia
- Improve swallowing dysfunction
- Decrease pain while swallowing
- Eliminate aspiration
- Improve nutrition
- Improve facial function
- Decrease healthcare costs

Contraindications:

- Reflux (not controlled by medication)
- Pacemaker
- A growth (neoplasm) in the neck region
- Dysphagia due to drug toxicity
- Severe dementia with verbosity during oral intake
- Contact isolation precautions
- Cancer (with active disease process)

For more information or to make a referral, please call 205 868-2098.

A Higher Level of Care
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Scientific Research on VitalStim® Therapy



The clinical data is compelling. The real-world evidence is unmistakable. Even to patients with long-term dysphagia, VitalStim Therapy holds remarkable potential – and abundant hope for a lasting solution.

In a clinical trial of nearly 900 patients, the results show:

VitalStim Therapy Electrical Stimulation

- 98.4% of patients improved their swallow function score
- 97.5% of patients with severe dysphagia regained swallow function past the point of PEG tube dependency
- 38.3% of patients with severe dysphagia regained full normal swallow function
- At three-year follow-up, over 76% retained swallow function and only 3% reported aspiration

Thermal-tactile Stimulation

- 32.7% of patients improved their swallow function score
- 38.9% of patients with severe dysphagia regained swallow function past the point of PEG tube dependency
- 0% of patients with severe dysphagia regained full normal swallow function
- At three-year follow-up, 43% had retained swallow function and 45% reported aspiration

VitalStim Therapy offers proven potential for long-term relief. Using only small amounts of electrical current, the only adverse side effects that have been reported are occasional, slight redness of the skin where the electrodes have been placed. The FDA has concluded that VitalStim Therapy is safe and effective.