

VitalStim Plus SEMG System - FAQ

Q1 What is dysphagia?

A. Dysphagia is defined as difficulty in swallowing. Symptoms of dysphagia can include coughing while swallowing or after swallowing, choking on food or liquid, the sensation of food getting stuck in the throat, pain during swallowing, shortness of breath during feeding and onset of pneumonia.

Q2 What is the VitalStim® Therapy System?

A. A therapeutic intervention for the management of dysphagia and difficulty swallowing. The VitalStim® Therapy System uses small electrical currents to stimulate the muscles responsible for swallowing. At the same time, trained specialists help patients "re-educate" their muscles through rehabilitation therapy.

Q3 How does it work?

A. A small, carefully calibrated current is delivered to the motor nerves of the patient's throat through specially designed electrodes causing the muscles responsible for swallowing to contract. At the same time, a dysphagia specialist guides the patient through active swallowing therapy to re-educate normal swallow function.

Q4 How is VitalStim different from conventional swallowing therapy?

A. Conventional therapy for dysphagia typically employs both compensatory strategy techniques (diet changes, head positioning or modifying bolus size) and specific techniques aimed at improving the coordination and strength of the swallowing muscles (thermal stimulation, biofeedback, mendelsohn maneuver or supraglottic swallow). The VitalStim® Therapy System is the use of electrical stimulation for activation of muscles. Research shows that the combination of

electrical stimulation and traditional treatment techniques is very effective at restoring swallowing function.

Q5 How long is a treatment session?

A. Treatment sessions usually last an hour.

Q6 How many sessions of VitalStim treatment before my swallowing improves?

A. This depends a lot on the underlying medical problem causing the dysphagia. In many patients, improvement in the swallowing function starts almost immediately. Patients often see good results in 6 to 20 treatment sessions. Your therapist can give you more information about how long your therapy with VitalStim might take.

Q7. Does this work with all forms of dysphagia?

A. One of the most common forms of dysphagia is oropharyngeal dysphagia which affects stroke survivors, patients with progressive neuromuscular disorders, head and neck cancer survivors and the elderly.

Q8. Does VitalStim hurt?

A. No. The VitalStim® Therapy System is a non-invasive, painless treatment.

Q9. Who can receive VitalStim?

A. VitalStim is effective for both sexes and all ages.

Q10. Who cannot receive VitalStim?

A. The VitalStim® Therapy System should not be used directly over an active neoplasm or infection. It should be used with caution in patients with seizure disorders and patients with implanted electronics (e.g., pacemakers, implantable defibrillators, deep brain stimulators). Some patients may not respond well to VitalStim. This may include patients with significant lower motor neuron damage

and patients with severely impaired cognition. A certified VitalStim clinician can give you more information about candidacy for this treatment.

Q11. What about patients with pacemakers?

A. Caution should be used with patients who have cardiac demand pacemakers.

Q12. What are the side effects of VitalStim?

A. The only problematic issue found during the study was the occasional occurrence of skin irritation as a result of the adhesive used to secure the stimulation electrode to the anterior portion of the neck.

Q13. What medical specialists provide VitalStim?

A. Medical specialists that commonly specialize in swallowing disorders include Speech-Language Pathologists and Occupational Therapists.