The mission of Allegheny Health Network’s Swallowing Center is to provide diagnostic evaluation for diseases of the pharynx, esophagus and stomach. The problems addressed by the center include difficulty swallowing, aspiration, chronic cough, GERD, hiatal hernia, Barrett’s esophagus, esophageal cancer, pharyngeal and esophageal diverticulum, and achalasia.

The unique services offered can provide invaluable information which assists in treatment, including medical and surgical therapies. Based on patient symptoms, Swallowing Center providers will select, perform and analyze the tests, which will lend insight into the cause of the problem. **A detailed and tailored interpretation of test results will be generated and communicated to referring providers along with recommendations for therapy.**
The Esophageal and Lung Institute’s Swallowing Center offers independent services in the areas of speech pathology, nutritional services, and esophageal/gastric physiology testing.

**Speech Pathology**
The Swallowing Center can provide services for the patient who is experiencing:
- Dysphagia
- Vocal dysfunction
- Dysarthria
- Aphasia
- Cognitive – Linguistic Deficits

Our speech-language pathologist is a VitalStim-certified provider. Instrumental evaluation of swallowing can be performed onsite by our speech pathologist who is certified and trained in F.E.E.S (Fiberoptic Endoscopic Evaluation of Swallowing) and experienced in comprehensive swallowing evaluations. Modified Barium Swallow studies can be performed by our speech-language pathologist. Once evaluated, a plan of care will be developed according to the deficits, address insurance requirements, and initiate treatment.

Speech therapy for dysphagia may include:
- Oral and pharyngeal strengthening and range of motion exercises
- Compensatory techniques
- Diet modification
- DPNS (Deep Pharyngeal Neurological Stimulation)
- VitalStim (Neuromuscular Electrical Stimulation)

The speech-language pathologist will work closely with the Institute’s registered dietitian to utilize an interdisciplinary approach to patient care.

**Nutrition Services**
The Swallowing Center can offer a comprehensive nutritional assessment which would include:
- Anthropometrics
- Physical findings
- GI problems (constipation, diarrhea, vomiting, etc.)
- Estimate of nutritional needs

Our registered dietitian can provide the following services:
- Pre and post-operative nutritional assessment, counseling and education
- Management of nutrition support
- Weight management counseling and education
- Food allergy management counseling and education

**Esophageal Physiology Testing**
The Swallowing Center has a certified GI registered nurse that can evaluate esophageal and gastric function by utilizing state-of-the-art equipment. Patients with the following issues would be ideal candidate for this type of testing: dysphagia, food-sticking sensation, reflux, heartburn, unexplained cough, etc.

Comprehensive evaluations and treatment for disorders of communication, language and cognition will be performed and implemented on a case by case basis.

The following tests are performed at each site:
- High-resolution esophageal motility with impedance study - Manometry
- 24 hour pH Impedance testing
- BRAVO (48 hour) pH monitoring system
- Smart Pill
- Pill Cam
- Endoscopic Ultrasound
- Upper Endoscopy

The studies are analyzed by one of our physicians and a report is generated and sent to the referring doctor.

The Swallowing Center at the Esophageal and Lung Institute can provide these services at five convenient locations:
- Allegheny General Hospital
- Forbes Hospital
- Peters Township Health + Wellness Pavilion
- West Penn Hospital
- Wexford Health + Wellness Pavilion

**The Swallowing Center core team includes:**
- Paula Tirpak, MS, CCC/SLP, senior speech-language pathologist and Swallowing Center director
- Blair A. Jobe, MD, director, Esophageal and Lung Institute
- Rodney Landreneau, MD, co-director, Esophageal and Lung Institute
- Toshitaka Hoppo, PhD, MD
- Yoshihiro Komatsu, MD
- Joan Schrenker, RN, CGRN
- Rachel Harkin, MS, RD, LDN, Dietitian

To schedule an appointment for any of these services, please call 724.260.7300.