

# NMES Treatment for Dysphagia

## **Departmental Policy Sample Policy:**

NMES Treatment for Dysphagia (sometimes called “VitalStim® Therapy”) is performed as part of therapeutic interventions for dysphagia on the order of a physician. The order will include specific mention of treatment of dysphagia. The order or Plan of Care will make specific mention of the use of electrotherapy. Only a Speech-Language Pathologist or Occupational Therapist certified in the use of NMES devices for Dysphagia therapy may perform the treatment.

**Purpose:** To establish clear guidelines for the procedure to be followed in the provision of NMES therapy for Dysphagia in the Outpatient, Inpatient and Sub-Acute Programs.

## **Procedure:**

1. Obtain a written physician’s order. The order will include the following items:

- Patient name and primary diagnosis
- Order for “dysphagia treatment”

2. Complete a Plan of Care and fax it to the referring physician’s office for signature (required in outpatient program only). The POC will include the following items:

- Evaluation of swallowing function by videofluoroscopy (MBS) and/or FEES
- Electrical stimulation (NMES)
- Dysphagia treatment
- Repeat evaluation of swallowing function by videofluoroscopy (MBS) and/or FEES as needed
- Frequency and duration: 12 treatment sessions, 3-5 x / week

3. Treatment will be performed according to the following guidelines:

- Only electrodes cleared by the FDA for this specific modality will be utilized. No other NMES electrodes may be used for the treatment of dysphagia.
- The use of electrodes can be “single patient – multiple application” if the electrodes are specifically cleared by the FDA for such application. The number of applications will be determined by the attending therapist and will vary depending on patient skin condition, and the condition of the electrode.

- Appropriate precautions and contraindications will be observed.
- Treatment will be performed by the certified dysphagia therapist.
- Treatment sessions will typically last for 1 hour. Variations in the duration of the session may occur based on patient need and tolerance.
- Electrical stimulation will occur for the entire duration of the treatment session.
- Dysphagia treatment will occur simultaneously to the electrical stimulation.
- The skin under the electrodes will be inspected before and after each treatment session.

4. A Modified Barium Swallow (MBS) or FEES study will typically be performed before initiating treatment and may be repeated at discharge. A repeat MBS may be performed during the course of treatment, if deemed indicated by the treating therapist. This will typically only be the case when the patient is not progressing as expected.

5. Patient status and progress will be recorded at each treatment session on the daily progress note.

6. Each patient will be charged 1 unit of dysphagia treatment.

7. A discharge summary sheet will be sent to the referring physician upon discharge. The discharge summary will include the following items:

- Patient name and diagnosis
- Summary of initial status, including findings of the initial MBS
- Summary of treatment received, including the total number of sessions and frequency and duration
- Summary of discharge status, including the feeding level and the findings of the discharge MBS (if performed)

**Original Date of Policy:** \_\_\_\_\_