An oral-pharyngeal motility (OPM) study is a feeding and swallow study that looks at how liquids and foods are controlled in the mouth and then moved through the mouth and throat during swallowing. It helps to identify specific sucking, chewing, and/or swallowing difficulties. An OPM study will help to determine if a patient is at risk for airway and breathing problems caused by aspiration or penetration. Aspiration occurs when liquids or foods enter the airway through the vocal cords. Penetration occurs when liquids or foods enter the opening to the airway, but are pulled back out before actually passing through the vocal cords.

Children who may need an OPM study:

Children who show frequent airway and breathing problems that appear to be related to possible aspiration may need an OPM study. These breathing problems may include:

- Frequent coughing and choking during feeding
- "Wet" sounding cough or voice
- Pneumonias
- Bronchitis
- Colds and/or runny nose
- Asthma symptoms that aren't controlled with medicines
- Fevers of unknown cause

Other patients may show watery eyes during feeding, and may avoid certain foods or liquids.

Prior to the OPM study:

Before scheduling the OPM study, the parent fills out a questionnaire to provide a history of feeding and swallowing difficulties. Or, a feeding study may be completed by an occupational therapist who specializes in feeding and swallowing difficulties. This information is reviewed, and if an OPM study is needed, the study is scheduled.

What will happen during the study:

1. This study is conducted in the Radiology department by a team consisting of a radiologist, a speech-language pathologist, and an occupational therapist.

2. During the study, your child is given various foods and liquids to eat or drink. These are mixed with barium to allow the foods and liquids to be seen by the x-ray camera.

3. If feeding or swallowing problems occur during the OPM study, the OPM team may try certain changes to see if the problems can be eliminated.

4. Following the study, the video tape is reviewed and recommendations are discussed with you. These recommendations are also given to your child's doctor.
**Possible risks:**

During the OPM study, some children may show fear, apprehension, or behavioral feeding problems. If a child does not cooperate, the results may not be usable. The OPM team is skilled at working with children to obtain a successful study.

Possible risks include:

- Exposure to small amounts of radiation
- Reaction to the barium
- Aspiration of the foods or liquids given

**Additional information:**

The OPM studies are scheduled through the Hearing and Speech department at Children's Mercy Hospital in Kansas City, Missouri. Additional information is available by contacting the Hearing and Speech department at (816) 234-3677.