

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SWORD SWALLOWERS



How long did it take you to learn to swallow a sword?

It took me three and a half years to learn to swallow my first sword and many more to be able to do what I do today, like swallowing three swords at once, curved swords, swallowing swords while hanging upside down, swallowing a sword with a bottle opener on the handle and opening beer bottles with it, I even swallow a tube with a halogen bulb in it and when I turn it on in my stomach you can see the glow of the lightbulb through my skin!

How old were you when you started?

My first public performance as a sword swallower was with the legendary Jim Rose Circus in Dublin, Ireland at the tender age of 22! (I started training when I was only eighteen!)

How did you learn?

I learned by sticking my fingers down my throat (and vomiting a lot, you really need to WANT to learn to swallow swords because its not pretty or much fun!) until I was able to control the gag reflex at the beginning of the throat, and afterwards with tubes and steel bars until I was eventually ready for a real sword.

Don't the swords roll or fold up into the handle?

No, the swords are made of solid steel, a lot of sword swallowers let the crowd touch the swords, or swallow swords with no handles to prove that they're real.

Can you vomit in real life?

Of course, but not by putting my fingers down my throat, its a little more complicated, I've got to do muscular contractions with my stomach.

Can you breath while the sword is inside you?

Yes, after a lot of training you can get to the point where you can breath while the sword is in you but its better to avoid it if possible because if you breath in a drop of saliva or a speck of dust and cough with the sword inside it's not a good thing!

How far inside you does the sword go?

The sword goes almost to the floor of my stomach, and believe me if you touch the floor of the stomach you notice it! The majority of sword swallowers mark a sword so they can measure the distance and cut there swords a few centimetres short of their "capacity" I sometimes eat a heavy meal before performing, a technique that allows me to swallow and sword an incredible 61 centimetres long from the tip of the sword to my lips!

What is the difference between a fakir and sword swallower?

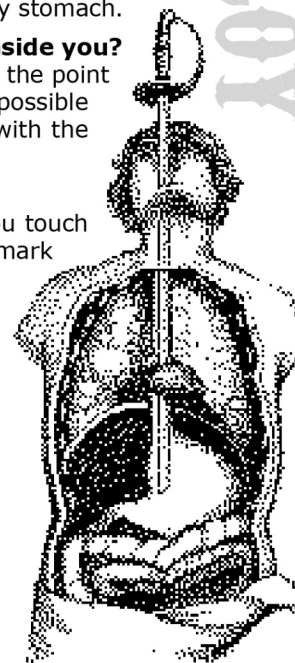
Fakirs are normally spiritual people who use meditation, yoga and other spiritual exercises to allow them to do amazing things, on the other hand the sword swallower may or may not have spiritual beliefs.

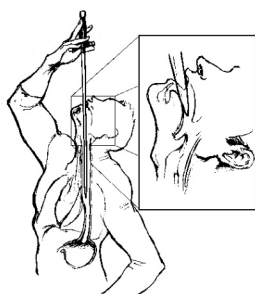
Where do you buy your swords?

Attention kids, you can buy really good swords in Toledo, Spain! (Just kidding!)

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Does it hurt to swallow a sword?

No, It's not a painful thing to do, it's a very strange sensation and takes a lot of getting used to but it's not painful.

What does it feel like?

The closest I've ever come to explaining it to a layperson is that it's like swallowing a really big piece of cutlery, it tastes similar as well!

What's the difference between a magician and a sword swallower?

Magicians do tricks and illusions, but a sword swallower does exactly what the name suggests, swallow swords!

How do you know how far in you can put the sword?

Well, when you hit some resistance you don't exactly start to push unless you want it to be the last sword you swallow!

Is it dangerous?

What do you think? Let's take a minute to think about it, I push a piece of solid steel past my lips, down my throat, through the esophagus and finally into my stomach, firstly I have to be able to control the gag reflex and not vomit or allow any other involuntary reactions to the cold steel, secondly I have to follow the esophagus and not push the sword into my lungs, and thirdly the sword passes within millimetres of the heart and other vital organs, is it dangerous? Of course!

Is it really real?

Yes, it is. Take a minute to look at the photo of the lightbulb glowing in my stomach or the X-rays of sword swallowers on the internet.

How many sword swallowers are there in the world ?

At the last count, there are less than a hundred sword swallowers on the planet (Two live in Spain and they are both foreigners) of these less than half are dedicated to professionally performing. In contrast;

- More than 2,249 people have successfully climbed Mt. Everest since 1953.
- More than 1,000 people have run the four minute mile more than 4,700 times since 1954.
- More than 750 astronauts have flown in space since 1961.
- More than 2.1 million people do parachute jumps every year.

Medical facts and curiosities about sword swallowers.

The art of sword swallowing is more than 4000 years old, it traces its origins to India around 2000BC

A normal person swallows about 600 times per day – 350 times while awake, 200 times during meals and 50 times while sleeping.

A normal swallow uses more than 50 pairs of muscles and can take from three to twentythree seconds to complete.

Sword swallowers use "mind over matter" to repress the gag reflex, the peristalsis reflex in the throat and the stomach retching reflex to swallow swords that can measure up to 72 cm's.

The art of sword swallowing can take between two and seven years to learn, and some people even after years of training are unable to learn.

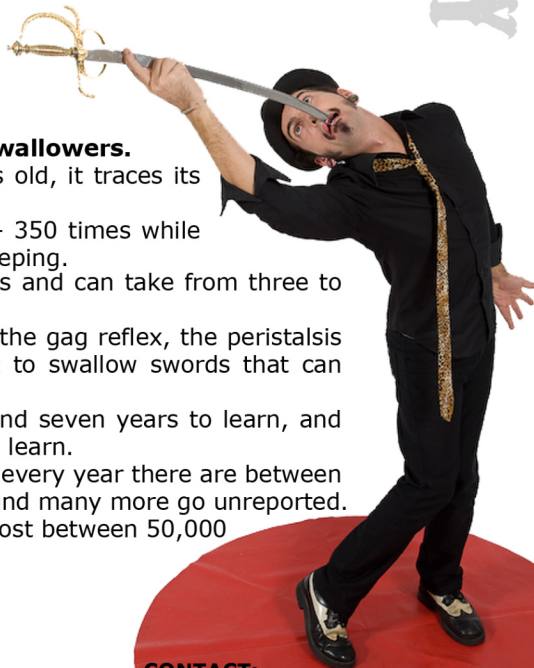
Sword swallowers association Internacional claim that every year there are between five and seven accidents that require hospitalisation, and many more go unreported.

The treatment of injuries from sword swallowing can cost between 50,000 and 70,000€.

What does your mother think?

She tries not to think about it!

Maybe all this explains why sword swallowers are so rare !



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