

Patient Information Leaflet

Examination with Barium Contrast A: Barium Swallow

Produced By: Diagnostic Imaging

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What is a Barium Swallow?

The gut does not show up well on ordinary x-rays. However, if the lining of the gut is coated with barium, a white liquid, then much greater detail is obtained; if the examination is to look at the oesophagus, sometimes known as the gullet, it is called a **Barium Swallow**.

Do I need to make any special preparation?

In general, your stomach and small intestine need to be empty for this examination to be successful.

Therefore you must not eat anything for 6 hours beforehand. However, please drink normally to ensure you are adequately hydrated prior to the procedure. If you normally take medicines in the morning, please take your prescribed medication as usual.

Patients with diabetes

If you are insulin dependent please contact your diabetes centre for advice on how to manage your blood sugar level, please bring your medication with you and something to eat. Barium Swallow examinations usually take no longer than 15-20 minutes.

Female Patients

We must undertake this examination within the **first 10 days** from the first day of your menstrual period.

This is because there are risks connected with pregnant patients. **It is essential that any woman who is pregnant, or might be pregnant, should notify the department in advance.** Please contact a senior radiographer in Diagnostic Imaging (**534666**) if the date for your appointment does not comply with the 10 day rule.

Can I bring a relative/friend?

Yes, but for reasons of safety, they will not be able to accompany you into the x-ray room, except in very special circumstances.

What happens during the investigation?

Barium Swallow:

You will be taken into the x-ray room, and asked to drink from a beaker containing the barium, a sticky white liquid which is mildly fruit flavoured, one or two mouthfuls at a time. You will be positioned in front of the x-ray camera, often standing on a small step attached to the couch in its upright position. Once the Radiologist has taken sufficient images, you will be free to go; the Barium Swallow usually lasts approximately 15 minutes.

Are there any side effects?

You may continue to feel slightly bloated for a short while until the air in your stomach works its way out.

You will be able to eat and drink normally straight away, and, for the first day or so, you should drink plenty of fluids to help the barium pass out of your system.

Your stools will look white and remain discoloured for the next day or so. Some people may get slightly constipated, and taking a mild laxative should help in this case. Barium stools are sometimes difficult to flush from the lavatory pan and may need repeated flushing. However, you should be able to return to your normal lifestyle straight away.

Are there any risks?

All x-ray procedures involve exposure to radiation in varying amounts. Although we are exposed to small amounts of background radiation from the environment throughout our lives, large amounts of radiation, either in one go or cumulatively, can add very slightly to the risk of developing cancer. The length and level of exposure to radiation from x-rays in medical procedures is strictly controlled and kept to the minimum possible. Any questions regarding the radiation dose of your examination please feel free to discuss prior to the procedure with the Consultant Radiologist.

When will I get my results?

After the procedure the Radiologist will examine the images further and provide a report on your Barium examination. This may take some time to reach your referring doctor, but is normally available within 7 working days.

Finally

If you have any questions or concerns that you would like answered, please contact;

(01983) 534666 Monday to Friday
09:00-12:30 and 13:30-16:30

Ask to speak to a Senior Radiographer in Diagnostic Imaging

Access to Health Records by Diagnostic Staff

As a patient undergoing tests as part of a diagnostic procedure information about you may be accessed by other healthcare professionals. It is normal practice in these circumstances for your consent to be implied as part of your agreement to have the test or tests performed.

Accidental over exposure of radiation

Despite all safeguards, medical exposures can occur where the actual dose is greater than was intended. The regulations governing these exposures are either IR(ME)R 2000 or IRR 99. In the event of an over exposure the incident will be reported to the Radiation Protection Advisor. It will be down to the discretion of the RPA as to whether there is a clinical requirement to inform any patient of an overexposure.

If you require this leaflet in another language, large print or another format, please contact the Quality Team, telephone 01983 534850, who will advise you.

Valuables should not be brought into the hospital. If patients have to bring in valuable items they should ask a nurse to store them safely and request a receipt for the items. You may not be able to have the valuable items returned if the time of discharge from hospital is out of hours.

We are sorry but the Trust cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage to items not given for safe keeping.

You can get further information on all sorts of health issues through NHS interactive available through Sky TV or online at: <http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/>

For Health advice and out of hours GP service please call the NHS 111 service on: 111

We Value Your Views On Our Service

If you wish to comment on the care which you, your relative or friend has received, we will be pleased to hear from you. Please speak to the person in charge of the ward, clinic or service in the first instance or ask them to contact the Quality Team. If you wish to contact them directly, telephone on 534850.

Alternatively you may prefer to write to:

Chief Executive
Isle Of Wight NHS Trust
St Mary's Hospital
Newport
Isle of Wight
PO30 5TG

You can also share any concerns you have about our services with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) on 03000 61 61 61 or at enquires@cqc.org.uk

All NHS sites are no smoking areas.

If you would like help and advice to stop smoking please call: Freephone 0800 169 0 169 to talk to the NHS Smoking Helpline.

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