

Barium Swallow

An information guide



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What is a barium swallow?

This is an examination of your oesophagus (the food pipe between your mouth and stomach)

Who performs your investigation?

A radiologist or specialist radiographer will perform your investigation assisted by a radiographer. Radiologists are doctors specially trained to interpret the images and carry out more complex examinations. A specialist radiographer may also carry out this test. They have also had the specialist training to carry out and report the examination. They are supported by radiographers who are highly trained to carry out x-rays and other imaging procedures.

Are you required to make any special preparation?

Ask your doctor not to give you any medicine which contains BISMUTH or CALCIUM for 3 days before the examination. They can give you MAGNESIA or BICARBONATE OF SODA instead to ease your symptoms.

You must not eat or drink anything for 3 hours before your investigation.

What happens during your investigation?

You will be asked to put on a hospital gown. You will be taken into an x-ray room and asked to swallow some granules and lemon juice which will feel fizzy in your stomach. You will then be given some liquid barium to swallow which is a white liquid that shows up on xrays. Xrays will be taken as you swallow the liquid to follow it down to your stomach. You will be asked to turn into different positions as the xrays are taken.

You may also be asked to swallow some biscuit coated in barium. If you are unable to tolerate biscuit (gluten free) please bring an alternative with you.

How long does the investigation take?

The whole process takes 15-20 minutes.

Are there any side/after effects?

You may have some slight discomfort in your stomach caused by the fizzy drink. You may have pale stools for a few days after your examination and you may feel constipated. We recommend drinking plenty of water for a few days after your investigation.

How do you get the results of your investigation?

The results of this investigation will be sent to the consultant that referred you for the investigation. Your consultant will notify you when he/she has the results.

IMPORTANT- Could you be pregnant?

This examination does involve using a small amount of radiation. This dose is kept to a minimum to reduce the risks to yourself.

This appointment for x-ray must fall within the first 28 days of your menstrual cycle, counting the day you start your period as day 1. If this appointment does not fall within these 28 days, or if you are at all uncertain, please contact the Booking Centre on 0161 778 2233. It is important that this rule is adhered to.

IMPORTANT- Are you diabetic?

If you did not make us aware you are diabetic when we arranged your appointment, please contact us on 0161 778 2233 to let us know.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your investigation please contact the radiology booking centre on 0161 778 2233.

If English is not your first language and you need help, please contact the Interpretation and Translation Service

Jeśli angielski nie jest twoim pierwszym językiem i potrzebujesz pomocy, skontaktuj się z działem tłumaczeń ustnych i pisemnych

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Dacă engleza nu este prima ta limbă și ai nevoie de ajutor, te rugăm să contactezi Serviciul de interpretare și traducere

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For advice on stopping smoking contact the Specialist Stop Smoking Service on 01706 517 522

For general enquiries please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 0161 604 5897

For enquiries regarding clinic appointments, clinical care and treatment please contact 0161 624 0420 and the Switchboard Operator will put you through to the correct department / service

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The NCA brings together Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust and the hospitals and community services of The Royal Oldham Hospital, Fairfield General Hospital in Bury, and Rochdale Infirmary (currently part of The Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust).

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