

Barium meal and swallow

An information guide



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Who performs your investigation?

A radiologist or specially trained radiographer will perform this investigation, assisted by a radiographer.

Radiologists are doctors specially trained to interpret the images and carry out more complex examinations. They are supported by radiographers who are highly trained to carry out x-rays and other imaging procedures.

What is a barium swallow and meal?

This is an x-ray examination of your food pipe and your stomach.

Are you required to make any special preparations?

You should have nothing to eat or drink for 3 hours before your appointment. If you need to take any medication you may have to have a small amount of water with your tablets.

What happens during the investigation?

You will then be asked to swallow some granules followed by some lemon juice. This temporarily enlarges your stomach and will make you feel as though you have had a fizzy drink.

You will be asked to move into different positions and to hold your breath while the pictures are taken. You may also be asked to swallow whilst lying down. A series of pictures may be taken whilst eating a biscuit coated in barium.

You will be asked to put on the hospital gown provided. You will be taken into the x-ray room and asked to drink from a cup containing the barium. This is a white liquid which is mildly fruit flavoured.

You will be asked to drink this one or two mouthfuls at a time and then x-ray images of your food pipe and stomach will be taken.

How long will it take?

This whole process should take about 15 - 30 minutes.

Are there any after-effects?

You may continue to feel slightly bloated for a short while until the air in your stomach works its way out. Otherwise you should be able to return to your normal lifestyle and work straight away.

You may have pale stools for a few days after your examination.

How do you get the results of your investigation?

The results will be sent to the consultant who referred you.

IMPORTANT – Could you be pregnant?

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 you are at all uncertain, please contact radiology appointments on 0161 778 2233. It is important that this rule is adhered to.

Please be aware that this examination uses a low dose of radiation. This is not harmful to you but if you are pregnant there could be a risk to your unborn baby. If you have any questions please contact the xray department.

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 us 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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Date of publication: April 2009

Date of review: June 2020

Date of next review: June 2022

Ref: 0544-PI(DS)

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