

Information for patients having a barium swallow / meal

Radiology

Information for patients and carers

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Caring for you

What is a barium swallow / meal?

A barium swallow or meal is an examination which looks at the:

- pharynx (throat)
- oesophagus (the tube that takes food down to your stomach)
- stomach
- duodenum (first part of the small intestine or bowel)

The test looks for problems like narrowings, hiatus hernia, acid reflux, ulcers, polyps and tumours.

How to prepare

You must:

- not eat or drink anything for 6 hours before your appointment.
- avoid chewing gum and smoking or vaping for 6 hours. These increase stomach fluids and can affect the test
- take your usual medication, unless you are diabetic. Diabetic patients should follow the advice on their appointment letter

If you think you are pregnant, please call us. Pregnant women are advised not have this test.

What happens when I have my barium swallow / meal?

- You may have to swallow a fizzy powder first (bicarbonate powder and citric acid). This makes gas in your stomach, so pictures are clearer.
- You will then drink some barium. This is a white liquid which coats your oesophagus (pipe that takes food to your stomach) and stomach, so they show on X-rays.
- Pictures will be taken while you stand or lie on the X-ray table.
- After the test, drink plenty of fluids as the barium can make you constipated.

Results

Your results will be sent to the doctor who referred you for the test.

If your GP referred you, book an appointment for about 14 days after the test.

If a hospital consultant referred you, an appointment date will be sent to you.

Further information

You can bring someone with you, but seating is limited and they are not normally allowed into the room during procedures.

If you need information in another language, large print, audio or Braille or have any other questions, please call **01925 665012**.