

BARIUM SWALLOW AND/OR MEAL

What is it?

Barium swallow and meals are very safe and straightforward, painless, way of radiologically looking at your oesophagus, stomach and duodenum. A Consultant Radiologist (doctor), performs the examination. You will be asked to stand behind a x-ray machine and given the barium to drink. This is like a thick milk shake. The radiologist will be able to see the barium on a TV monitor and will take some pictures during the procedure. The x-ray table that you stand against will be tilted, as we usually have to examine you lying down. The radiologist will warn you when this is about to happen. You will also be turned from side to side during the examination, so that the radiologist can see different parts of the upper part of your gastrointestinal tract that is being investigated.

What preparation is needed for the examination?

We need to have your stomach completely empty and ask you **NOT TO EAT OR DRINK ANYTHING FOR 6 HOURS BEFOREHAND.** Please tell us if you are diabetic. Women will be asked about the possibility of pregnancy.

What exactly happens during the examination?

When you arrive in the Department either a radiographer, radiographer's helper or nurse will take you into a cubicle to get you changed for the examination. They will then take you into the x-ray room, where they will explain the examination to you. Please feel free to ask them any questions you may have. The Radiologist may also discuss your symptoms with you and will explain what is going to happen.

The exact nature of the examination varies depending on your clinical problem. You may be given some powder to swallow with a fluid. Together these effervesce to create some gas in your stomach. Please try not to release this, as we need

the gas in your stomach for the examination. You may need to be given an injection of Buscopan into a vein in your arm. This is to stop the bowel contracting, so that we can see it properly. The injection will also dilate the pupil of your eye and this may cause blurred vision. If this occurs, you should not leave the Department until this has worn off. You will be safe to drive afterwards. If you have glaucoma or heart disease, you will be given a special injection that will not cause you any problems in this respect. It is extremely uncommon for there to be any reaction to Buscopan. It is possible that it could unmask undiagnosed glaucoma, so that if you develop a very painful red eye, notify a doctor immediately.

Does this procedure hurt?

The procedure may be a little uncomfortable but is not painful and the examination is very safe.

How long will it take?

The actual examination takes only about 15 minutes. You should, however, expect to be in the Department for about an hour.

When will I get my results?

When you have had the examination, the radiographer will tell you how and approximately when you will get the results but they are usually sent to the doctor who referred you to us within 48 hours.

Aftercare

You can eat and drink normally. The side effects of barium are that your faeces turn white and it has a constipating effect. Please drink plenty and eat fruit to overcome the latter. If you suffer with constipation, a mild laxative may be taken. If you had an injection, the effects should have worn off by the time you leave the Department.

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