

Radiology

Active cycle of breathing technique (background information – aspirated barium)

This information is for patients who have aspirated barium into the lungs during a barium swallow or meal.

A barium swallow is performed to examine the oesophagus (food pipe). A barium meal is performed to examine the stomach (upper digestive tract) and duodenum (first part of the small intestine).

What does aspirated mean

Aspiration is when something you swallow goes down the wrong way and enters your airway or lungs. Occasionally during the procedure, a patient will cough or have difficulty swallowing the barium. As your oesophagus (gullet) is close proximity to the trachea (windpipe), the barium liquid may be inhaled, via the trachea, into the lungs.

How will I know if I have aspirated any barium contrast

The radiologist or specialist radiographer will know if you have aspirated the barium liquid whilst the investigation is being carried out. They'll be able to see this happen on the special X-ray equipment during the procedure.

You may also find that you want to cough naturally as the barium liquid will irritate your lungs.



Patient Information

Risks

Aspiration of barium sulphate is not expected to cause severe lung injury due to its relatively non-irritant nature. However, complications that do arise depend upon:

- the density and quantity of the aspirated solution
- how far it has progressed into the lung
- the general physical condition of the patient

Rarely, cases may result in inflammatory changes, pneumonia, or fibrosis of the lung tissue without early treatment and follow-up.

Treatment

If you have aspirated some of the barium liquid into the lungs we need to clear your chest as soon as possible to prevent a chest infection developing. To do this, we use some special breathing techniques and positioning called postural drainage.

These exercises will be performed in the Radiology Department before you go home. Your specialist radiographer will tell you if you need to do the exercises when you get home and how often to do them.

Active cycle of breathing technique

Active cycle of breathing technique (ACBT) is a simple pattern of breathing that helps to:

- loosen and clear mucus from the lungs
- improve the efficiency of your cough
- improve ventilation in your lungs.

Patient Information

The radiologist or specialist radiographer will discuss the technique with you. They'll make sure you understand how it works and how to do it. You'll be given an active cycle of breathing technique instructional leaflet to take home.

What you need to do after discharge from hospital

- The radiologist, radiology nurse or specialist radiographer will observe you before going home.
- You'll be given clear instructions on breathing exercises to be continued at home.
- Please be careful when you first start to mobilise. Make sure you are steady on your feet.
- You may need to arrange for someone to take you home.
- Take your regular medicines as normal.
- A letter will be sent to your GP telling them about the procedure.
- If you have any breathing difficulties or develop a cough, please seek medical advice.

More information

If you have any other questions or would like more information, contact the Radiology Department on 024 7696 7115 between 9am to 5pm.

Outside these hours, please contact 111 or seek medical advice from your GP.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact the

Patient Information

telephone number on your appointment letter and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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Document History	
Department:	Radiology
Contact:	27161
Updated:	March 2024
Review:	March 2026
Version:	4
Reference:	HIC/LFT/1505/12