

## Radiology Department

# Barium swallow and/or meal

You have been advised by your doctor to have a barium swallow and/or meal examination. You have been referred to the Radiology Department to have this procedure. This information leaflet has been produced to give you general information and is intended to answer most of your questions.

This leaflet is not intended to replace the discussion between you and your consultant but may act as a starting point for discussion. After reading this information, if you still have concerns or require further explanation, please contact the Radiology team on the telephone number **02476 967115**.

Please read this leaflet carefully to ensure you are successfully prepared for the procedure. Please contact the X-ray Department if your weight is equal to or more than 205kg (32 stone). You may require an alternative procedure.

### Points to remember

- Please bring any sprays or inhalers that you are taking with you to your appointment.
- Please continue to take any medication as usual, **except as below**
- **If you are diabetic, you should not take your morning insulin or diabetes tablets (such as metformin) prior to the examination.** Please bring your own insulin, and any instructions you have for taking it, with you to the hospital. You may also wish to bring a snack with you to eat after your examination.



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- Please leave any valuable possessions at home.

### What is a barium swallow and/or meal?

- Barium is a white liquid which shows up clearly on X-ray. Once you drink it, it will pass through the body naturally.
- **A barium swallow** is an X-ray examination of the oesophagus (the pipe which connects the mouth and the stomach).
- **A barium meal** is an X-ray examination of the stomach and the duodenum (a short tube connecting the stomach to the small intestine).
- **A barium swallow and meal** is an X-ray examination of the oesophagus, stomach and duodenum.

The examination will be performed by a radiologist (X-ray doctor) or an advanced practitioner radiographer. They will be assisted by a radiographer and a radiology department assistant. The procedure may take up to 30 minutes.

### Preparation

- **Do not** eat or drink anything for 4 hours prior to your appointment.
- **If you have diabetes**, you are still required to starve before the examination. You should have been given an early morning appointment (no later than 10.15am). If this is not the case, please phone the number on your appointment letter and ask to be put through to the Fluoroscopy Appointments Officer to rearrange your appointment time.

Explain that you have been advised in this leaflet to rearrange your appointment to the next available appropriate time.

### Risks of the procedure

- X-rays are a type of radiation. We are all exposed to natural background radiation every day of our lives. This comes from the sun, the food we eat, and the ground. Exposure to X-rays carry a small risk, but your doctor feels

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that this risk is outweighed by the benefits of having the test. We will take all the safety precautions to minimise the number of X-rays you receive.

### Safety

**Could you be pregnant?** The risks of radiation are slightly higher for your unborn child. You will be asked to confirm that you are not pregnant before the examination can proceed.

### What will happen when I arrive?

- When you arrive at the Radiology / X-ray Department, please follow the signs for Route 2: Fluoroscopy and Intervention and report to the reception desk where you will be checked in and asked to undress and put on an examination gown.
- Please feel free to bring your own dressing gown to wear over the X-ray gown.

### During your examination

- You will be taken into the X-ray room. Here the examination will be explained to you, and you may ask any questions that you have.

### Barium swallow:

- You will be asked to stand against the X-ray table and swallow mouthfuls of barium liquid. The radiologist will follow the liquid with the X-ray machine as it passes down your throat.
- You may be asked to lie down on the X-ray table during the procedure and drink barium liquid or water through a straw.

### Barium meal:

- You may be asked to swallow a 'sherbet' powder and a lemon flavoured drink. When these combine, they fizz and release air into your stomach. It is important to keep this air in your stomach so you will be asked not to burp.

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- You will be asked to stand against the X-ray table and swallow mouthfuls of barium liquid. The radiologist will follow the liquid with the X-ray machine as it passes down your throat and into your stomach.
- The X-ray table will be moved into a horizontal position. You will then be asked to move into different positions on the X-ray table so that your stomach is coated with a thin layer of the barium liquid. X-ray pictures will then be taken by the radiologist.

## After your examination

- Once the examination is complete you may go home or return to work.
- Please remember to drink plenty of fluids over the next few days to avoid constipation.
- Your poo may be pale over the next few days.
- If you have any problems after the examination, please see your GP.

## How do I get the results?

- The results will not be given to you immediately. They will be sent to the doctor who referred you to us for this examination.

## Other Sources of Information:

- For general information about radiology departments visit the Royal College of Radiologists website: [www.goingfora.com](http://www.goingfora.com)
- For information about the effects of X-rays read the NRPB publication: "X-rays how safe are they?" on the Health Protection Agency website: [www.hpa.org.uk/radiation](http://www.hpa.org.uk/radiation)

Please note that the views expressed in these websites do not necessarily reflect the views of UHCW NHS Trust or the NHS.

If you would like further information, please contact the Radiology Reception on 024 7696 6331.

## Patient Information

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact the telephone number on your appointment letter or 02476 967161 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

To give feedback on this leaflet please email [feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk](mailto:feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk)

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