

Barium Swallow

What is a barium swallow?

A barium swallow x-ray will allow the radiologist to clearly view the oesophagus (gullet) and its junction with the stomach.

Preparation

Please fast for 4 hours prior to this procedure.

If you have diabetes, please inform the radiology department before your appointment.

Please DO NOT take your normal medication before the procedure, bring your medications with you to take after the examination.

Procedure

At the time of the procedure you will be asked to drink a glass of creamy, chalky liquid, known as barium. A gas-making mixture may be given to help stretch the oesophagus. The barium and gas mixture is watched on the TV screen, being recorded as necessary. The oesophagus may be examined in different positions such as standing, lying or head down. The test takes 10-15 minutes to complete.

Occasionally an injection to relax the gut wall muscle is needed for a complete study and this will be discussed with you, if necessary, by the radiologist.

How long will the procedure take?

Whilst usually shorter, the barium swallow procedure can take up to 30 minutes.

After the procedure it is important to drink a lot of fluid and return to your normal diet.

The radiologist will then examine the films and send a report to your doctor.

Please bring any previous x-rays with you on the day of your examination.