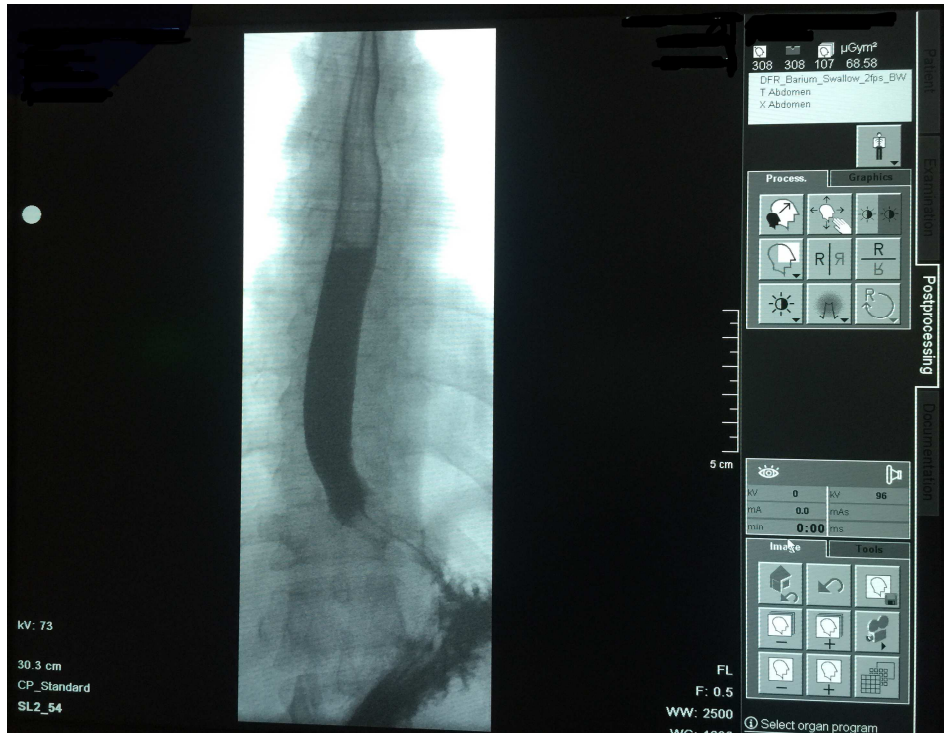


Feedback

If you have any comments about this patient information leaflet please contact the X-Ray Department on 01476 464285.



References

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet please email patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk
The Trust endeavours to ensure that the information given here is accurate and impartial.



If you require this information in another language, large print, audio (CD or tape) or braille, please email the Patient Information team at patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk

Having a Barium Swallow

This leaflet tells you about your Barium Swallow examination
Please read it carefully as it contains important information and instructions

Radiology Department
Grantham & District Hospital
01476 464285
www.ulh.nhs.uk

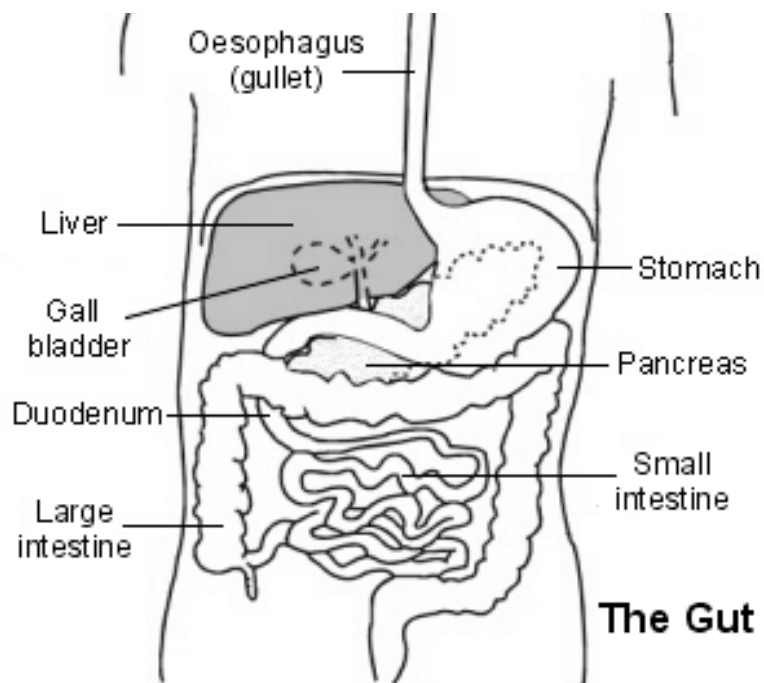


Aim of the leaflet

This leaflet is aimed at patients who require a barium meal. It explains the procedure, side effects and what to expect afterwards.

What is a barium swallow?

- A barium swallow is an x-ray test to examine the lining of the throat and gullet (oesophagus), which connects the mouth and the stomach.
- Your oesophagus does not show up very well on ordinary x-ray pictures. However, if you drink a barium suspension it coats the lining of your gullet and the outline shows up clearly. This is because x-rays do not pass through barium.
- Abnormalities in the lining or structure of the oesophagus can then be seen on the x-ray pictures.



Please let the X-Ray Department know if you have been sterilised or have had your womb removed (hysterectomy) as your appointment will not need to be timed in this way.

Further sources of information

www.goingfora.com/radiology/barium_room.html

www.patient.co.uk

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

www.diabetes.co.uk

For information about the effects of X-rays read the NRPB publication: "X-rays how safe are they" on the National Radiological Protection Board website: www.nrpb.org.uk

Grantham Hospital car parking charges

0 -1 hours £1.40

1-4 hours £3.40

4-6 hours £4.00

Blue Badge Holders £1.50 per day

Useful contact numbers

Grantham Hospital Switchboard 01476 565232

X-Ray Department 01476 464285

Diabetes Centre 01476 464811

After you have had a barium swallow

You can eat and drink normally once the test is completed.

It usually takes a couple of days for the barium to pass out of your system. During this time your bowel motions may be white or paler than normal and may be more difficult to flush.

Drink plenty of fluids and eat fibre and fruit to help prevent constipation.

See your doctor if you haven't passed any faeces (stools) after three or four days, unless this is normal for you.

Will I get the results straight away?

No. The images have to be read by a Consultant Radiologist and the results are sent to the referring doctor.

If your GP requested the test make an appointment to see them a week after your test.

If a doctor in the hospital requested the test, you will be sent another outpatient appointment to get your test results.

Females of childbearing age

Pregnant women, if possible, should not have an X-ray test as there is a small risk that X-rays may cause an abnormality to the unborn child.

If there is any possibility that you could be pregnant, please contact the X-ray Department on 01476 464285.

If you are between 12 and 55 years old you may be asked to contact the X-Ray Department on the first day of your period so that this test can be done within 10 days to avoid any possibility of pregnancy.

Why do I need a barium swallow?

Your doctor has requested a barium swallow because you have symptoms which may indicate a problem in your oesophagus such as difficulty swallowing, painful swallowing, a sensation of something sticking in your throat or gullet, heartburn, or for speech and language therapy studies etc.

It is used to look for problems in the oesophagus such as disorders of swallowing, inflammation caused by reflux from the stomach, pouches, a stricture (narrowing), etc.

What preparation do I need before a barium swallow?

It is very important that you follow the instructions carefully.

Please do not have anything to eat or drink for four hours prior to your appointment so that your stomach is empty (food particles in the gut can make it difficult to interpret the x-rays).

What about taking my medicines?

If you usually take medicines in tablet form, you may only take them as long as it is more than four hours before your appointment.

Do not take any tablets less than four hours before your test.

Bring with you to your appointment any tablets you might need to take, as you can have them after your examination.

If you have diabetes, please contact the X-Ray Department on 01476 464285 as we may not be aware of it.

What if I have diabetes treated by diet alone or by tablets and/or insulin and diet?

Whether your diabetes is controlled by diet alone, or you take tablets and/or insulin to control your diabetes in addition to watching your diet, you should be able to follow the preparation advice without ill effects from your diabetes.

If you are unsure how you treat your diabetes you can phone the Diabetes Centre on 01476 464811 for advice and reassurance. Please write down any advice the Diabetes Centre gives you.

Please bring with you to the X-Ray Department something to eat after your test and any diabetes medication you have been prescribed.

How is a barium swallow carried out?

You can have a barium swallow as an out-patient. The test is usually carried out by a radiologist, assisted by a radiographer or assistant practitioner.

You will be asked to undress and put on a gown, then you will be taken into the X-ray room where the examination will be explained to you and you may ask any questions that you have. The test takes about 10 minutes.

You will be asked to stand upright on a low platform against the X-ray couch. Please let the X-Ray Department know if you think this will be a problem for you.

You will be given a cup of barium to drink. This is a chalky white fluid which may be fruit flavoured and is not unpleasant to drink.

Several x-ray pictures will be taken as you swallow the barium liquid and you will be asked to turn into different positions.

Are there any side effects or risks from a barium swallow?

Some people develop constipation after a barium swallow.

The barium does not get absorbed into the body, so it is rare for a barium test to cause any other complications or side-effects.

A rare complication may be a slight risk of aspiration of the barium into the lungs. To avoid this, the radiologist will watch you swallowing the barium on a television monitor.

An extremely rare complication may be leakage of barium from an unsuspected perforation (a small hole in the wall) of the oesophagus.

The risk of having X-rays is very small indeed. We are all exposed to natural background radiation every day of our lives. This comes from the sun, food we eat and the ground. Each examination gives a dose on top of this natural background radiation.

The risks of radiation are slightly higher for the unborn child so we must ask female patients aged 12 to 55 years about their menstrual history.

The radiation from the X-rays during a Barium swallow examination is equivalent to receiving approximately 1½ years of natural background radiation. We will take all safeguards to minimise the amount of X-rays you receive.

The benefits of this examination outweigh any potential risk and the risk from not having the examination could be greater.

If you have any concerns about the side effects or risks associated with having a barium swallow, contact your GP.