

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 Follow Through

This leaflet tells you about your Barium Follow Through examination

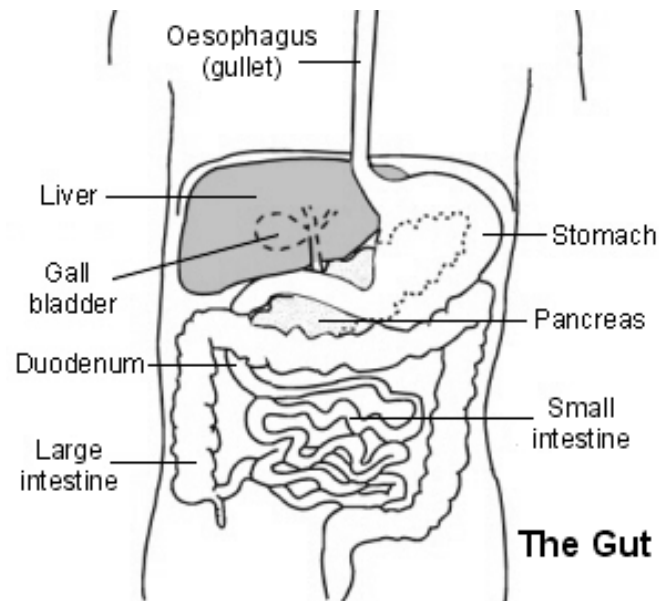
Please read it carefully as it contains important information and instructions

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

What is a barium follow through?

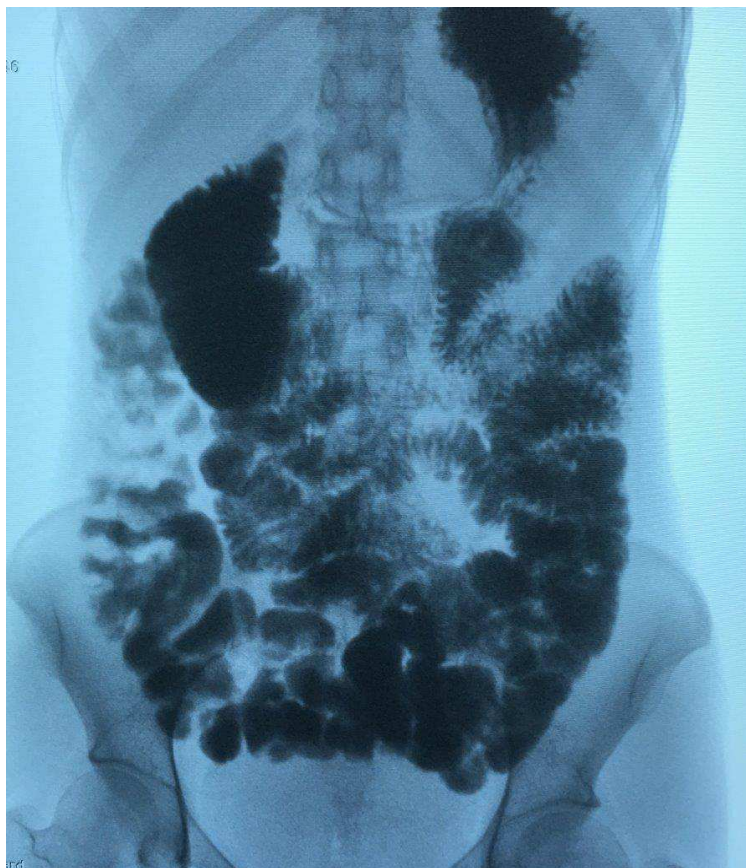
Notes

- A barium follow through is an x-ray test to look for problems in the small bowel (intestine). It is used to look for problems such as polyps, inflammation, narrowing of the bowel, Crohn's disease, Meckels diverticulum, or investigations of transit time etc.
- Your small intestine does not show up very well on ordinary x-ray pictures. However, if you drink a mixture of Barium (a thick white liquid) and Gastrografin, it coats the lining of your small intestine and the outline shows up clearly. This is because x-rays do not pass through barium.



Feedback

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



Why do I need a barium follow through?

Your doctor has requested a barium follow through because you have symptoms which may indicate a problem in your small intestine such as abdominal pain, diarrhoea, bleeding, Crohn's disease, etc.

What preparation do I need before a barium follow through?

- The day before your examination you will need to follow a restricted diet. Please read the enclosed diet sheet which advises you on the kind of food to eat the day before and on the day of your examination.

What if I have a colostomy or ileostomy?

- Please contact the X-Ray Department on 01476 464285 as we may not be aware that you have a colostomy or ileostomy.
- Contact the colorectal nurse on 01476 464822 for further information.

What about taking my medicines?

- Do not take bran, iron tablets or anti-diarrhoea tablets for 7 days before the examination, but continue any other medication.

If you have diabetes

- If you have diabetes, you should have received a morning appointment. If not, please contact the X-Ray Department on 01476 464285 as it may be that we are not aware that you have diabetes.

Diabetes treated by diet only

- If you are unsure how you treat your diabetes you can phone the Diabetes Centre on 01476 464811 for advice and reassurance.
- If your diabetes is controlled by diet alone, you should be able to follow the bowel preparation advice without ill effects from your diabetes.
- Please bring something to eat afterwards with you to the X-Ray Department.

Diabetes treated by tablets and/or insulin and diet

- If you take tablets and/or insulin to control your diabetes you may have to alter your medication while you are unable to eat a normal diet.
- Please contact the Diabetes Centre on 01476 464811 for personalised advice regarding your diabetes medication.
- If you have a blood glucose monitor, it is advisable to monitor your blood sugar levels every two hours while you are following the bowel preparation instructions.
- The Diabetes Centre staff will advise you if you are at risk of low blood glucose levels (hypos). If you treat your diabetes with certain tablets or insulin, you may be at higher risk of experiencing low blood glucose (sugar) levels.
- If you are unsure about how to recognise or treat low blood glucose levels (hypos), please discuss this with the Diabetes Centre.
- Please bring something to eat afterwards and your diabetes medication with you to the X-Ray Department.
- Please write down the advice the Diabetes Centre gives you.

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

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

Colorectal Nurse 01476 464822

After you have had a barium follow through

- You can eat and drink normally straight away. To avoid constipation, have lots to drink and eat plenty of fruit for two days after the test to help flush the barium out of your gut.
- You should be able to go home as soon as the test is finished.
- The barium may make your stools pale until it has all passed out from your colon.
- 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 x-rays 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. This is why women are asked before having an x-ray if there is any possibility that they could be pregnant.
- If you are between 12 and 50 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.

Usual Medication/Insulin - Include Doses:

(Please write your normal medication and/or insulin in this space)

2 days before procedure: *(Use this space to record advice given)*

Day before procedure: *(Use this space to record advice given)*

Day of procedure: *(Use this space to record advice given)*

Following procedure: *(Use this space to record advice given)*

How is a barium follow through carried out?

- You can have a barium follow through 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 taken into the X-ray room where the examination will be explained to you and you may ask any questions that you have.
- You will be given a cup of barium mixture to drink, usually containing barium and Gastrografin. This is a chalky white fluid which is slightly aniseed flavoured and is not too unpleasant to drink.
- You will be asked to lie down on the x-ray table on your right side to help the barium mixture move from your stomach into your small bowel. An x-ray of your abdomen will be taken 10 to 15 minutes after this (this allows time for the barium to reach the small intestine).
- You will then have to wait for the barium to go through the small intestine until it reaches the large intestine (the colon). An x-ray will be taken approximately every 20 minutes to determine the progress. This process can take a few hours and is individual to each person.
- We recommend that you anticipate at least 2 hours for this procedure although at times it can be quite a bit faster than this, or occasionally rather slower.
- Once the barium has reached the first part of the large bowel, some more x-ray pictures are taken and you will be asked to turn over into different positions on the x-ray table. The aim is to have pictures of all parts of the small bowel.
- If you think you will have difficulty turning on the couch please contact the X-ray Department before attending.

Are there any side-effects or risks from a barium follow through?

- 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.
- An extremely rare complication may be leakage of barium from an unsuspected perforation (a small hole in the wall) of the small bowel. This is generally only a risk if you have a badly inflamed small bowel or a blockage.
- 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 radiation from the X-rays during a Barium Follow Through 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 risks of radiation are slightly higher for the unborn child so we must ask female patients aged 10 to 55 years about their menstrual history.
- 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 follow through, contact your GP.