

Information for Patients and Carers

Paediatric Barium Swallow / Meal



Your doctor has asked you to have a barium swallow or a barium meal. To have this, you need to visit us in the X-ray department at the hospital, this leaflet will explain what happens.

What is a barium swallow or a barium meal?

If you are struggling to swallow or being sick, your doctor may ask for an X-ray swallowing test to see what is happening. This is called a barium swallow or a barium meal examination.

To have the test you will be asked to visit our X-ray department at the hospital. We will use a special X-ray camera to take some pictures showing us how things look on the inside of your body. This helps the doctor find out why you are struggling to swallow or why you are being sick.

You will meet one of our friendly radiographers who will help you during the test and they will tell you what you need to do. Sometimes an X-ray doctor, called a radiologist is there too.

During the test, we will ask you to take some mouthfuls of a white drink called 'barium'. The barium drink lets us see how liquid moves through your food pipe and into your tummy. You will only need to take one mouthful of the drink at a time. We may also ask you to eat a piece of biscuit to see if this moves differently to the barium drink.

Can someone come with me?

Someone can come with you when you visit us for your barium test. They can also come into the X-ray room with you so that we can talk to you both about the test.

You can then decide if you would like them to stay in the room with you, or they can wait outside for you.

The test only takes 20-30 minutes.

What do I need to do before my barium swallow or meal?

Before your test, you must not have anything to eat or drink. This is explained in the appointment letter we send to your parent or guardian. This is so that we can get clear pictures of your tummy when it is empty. As soon as we have finished your test you can have something to eat and drink.



What happens during my barium swallow or meal?

- We will ask your parent or guardian some questions to check that it is safe for you to have the test
- We may then ask you to put on one of our hospital gowns, this is so any buttons or zips on your clothing don't show up on the pictures we take

- You will then be asked to stand on a small step which is connected to the X-ray bed and the X-ray camera will be next to you.



- We will ask you to have a mouthful of the barium drink. Try and hold it in your mouth until we say “swallow”. You will only need to hold it in your mouth for a few seconds



- As you swallow the drink, the X-ray camera will make a 'beep' noise, this means it is taking the pictures
- The camera will move down at the side of you, but it will not touch you at any point during the test
- We will then ask you to turn on the step so we can take some more pictures from the front and from the other side
- We may also ask you to eat a piece of biscuit (with some barium on) so we can see how food moves inside you too



- For the last part of the test, we will ask you to lie down on the X-ray bed. We may ask you to lie on your side and then on your tummy too. This helps to move the barium drink inside you, so we can get some clear pictures

What happens after my barium swallow or meal?

When we have finished your test, you can get dressed and go home. You will now be able to have something to eat and drink as normal.

We won't be able to tell you the results of your test before you leave, as the radiographer or doctor will need to have a look at all the pictures they have taken.

We will then send the results to the doctor who asked you to have the test, and they will let you know what we have seen on the pictures.



Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact us at Royal Preston Hospital on **01772 522096**.

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

www.patient.co.uk

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/veteran-aware

<https://bepartofresearch.nihr.ac.uk/>

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www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets

Please ask a member of staff if you would like help in understanding this information.

This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.

Our patient information group review our leaflets regularly, if you feel you would like to feedback on this information or join our reading group please contact on email address:

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