

Patient information

Information about your Barium Meal examination

If, for any reason, you cannot keep this appointment, please telephone 01284 713378. This will avoid undue delay and will help us to keep our waiting list as short as possible.

What is a Barium follow through examination?

A barium meal is an x-ray guided examination of your stomach and your oesophagus (gullet), the tube between your mouth and your stomach. Normally, your stomach and bowel do not show well on x-ray so you will be asked to drink a liquid (barium) that is visible on x-rays to see what happens when you swallow.

This test has been requested as your doctor feels it is the most suitable procedure for you.

Why do I need this procedure?

Your doctor has referred you for a barium meal to help make a diagnosis or to guide further treatment plans.

The procedure is commonly performed on people with:

- Swallowing difficulties
- Feeling of food being 'stuck'
- Pain when swallowing
- Indigestion or regurgitation of food (reflux)

How do I prepare for the procedure?

- Eat a light meal on the evening before your appointment.
- DO NOT eat or drink anything for 6 hours before your appointment.
- DO NOT smoke, chew gum, eat sweets or take any antacid medication after midnight until after your appointment.
- You may brush your teeth but do not swallow the water.
- Continue to take any medicines prescribed by your doctor.

Diabetic patients

- If you are diabetic your appointment should be before 10am. If it is not, then please call the Radiology department on **01284 713378**.
- If your diabetes is controlled by diet, please follow the instructions above.
- If your diabetes is controlled by tablets, then do not take the tablets on the day of the examination until after your appointment.
- If your diabetes is controlled by insulin +/- tablets, then do not take the insulin +/- tablets on the day of the examination until after your appointment.

If you have any questions, please contact the diabetes centre on 01284 713311.

Please call us on the telephone number at top of leaflet if you have problems standing or any mobility problems so we can arrangements can be made.

What happens when I arrive?

It is not advisable to bring children when you are attending your appointment. Staff are not legally able to look after them.

Please attend the **Radiology (x-ray)** department on the ground floor of the hospital where the receptionist will check your personal details.

You will be asked to change into a gown for the examination. Please leave all jewellery at home, wedding rings do not need to be removed. The hospital is not responsible for any lost or stolen valuables.

You will be taken into the x-ray room and the Radiographer will explain the procedure and answer any questions.

Because of the potential risks to an unborn child, we need to know, for certain examinations, if there is any possibility of a patient being pregnant.

All patients between the ages of 12 years and 54 years of age will be asked if there is the possibility of pregnancy. Discussions will be carried out in private and in confidence.

How is a Barium Meal performed?

A radiographer will be performing your examination and will be supported by an imaging assistant. Both male and female staff may be present in the room during the examination.

This procedure may be carried out in a slightly darkened room. This helps the radiographer see the images clearly. It will take 10-15 mins to complete and should not be painful.

You will be given some Carbex powder (mixed with water) and liquid which creates a gas in your stomach.

You may be given an injection to relax the stomach (Buscopan). This can cause minor blurring of the vision and a dry mouth, but this should only last up to 20 minutes. You should not drive until these effects have worn off.

You will be given some barium to drink and several X-ray images will then be taken while you are lying in different positions on your back, side, and front on the X-ray table. The table may also move or tilt as the x-rays are taken.

You may also be asked to hold your breath for a few seconds or to produce a 'cough' while on your back. When enough pictures have been taken, the examination is complete.

After the examination:

Some people may feel bloated after the examination, most people have no side effects.

The barium may make you constipated, but this can be helped by:

- Having lots to drink for a day or so after to flush the barium out of the intestine.
- Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables for a day or so.

The barium may also make your faeces (poo) white or pale until it has been passed from your intestines.

You may eat and drink normally after the procedure and continue with your normal activities.

Are there any risks or complications?

As with every medical procedure the risk must be compared to the benefit of having the procedure carried out. The doctor who requested the procedure will have considered this very carefully.

There is a risk that some of the food or drink may go down into your airway (aspiration). Special care is taken to minimise this risk. If significant aspiration is observed, additional respiratory advice will be provided.

You are here for an examination which uses x-rays to produce images of your body. Please be assured that we always aim to keep radiation exposures as low as possible.

Diagnostic Procedure	Typical effective dose (milliSieverts)	Equivalent amount of background radiation
Barium swallow	1.5	8 months

UK average background radiation = 2.2 mSv per year.

If you have any questions, please speak to the radiographer carrying out your examination.

X-rays and Pregnancy

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Discussion will be carried out in private and in confidence.

When will I get my results?

All the images will be examined after your procedure and a written report on the findings sent to your referring doctor in approximately 14 days.

Feedback:

Please tell us about your experience following your appointment.

You can email PALS@wsh.nhs.uk or you can complete our survey using the weblink

<https://bit.ly/3U3803t> or the QR code below:



Data Protection information

West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust will manage your information in line with the General Data Protection Regulation 2018. The information you provide will be retained for the purposes of your healthcare. The information will be retained in line with the *NHS Records Management Code of Practice for Health & Social care*.

You have rights in relation to the way we process your information. If you no longer want us to use your information for the purposes specified above; if you want to request to have your information erased or rectified, please contact the Information Governance team on 01284 713454 or email info.gov@wsh.nhs.uk

We will review all requests in relation to your rights under GDPR, along with our responsibilities for record keeping.

Images may be used for research purposes as well as teaching. Patients must inform a member of staff if they do not consent to this.

As part of a shared service agreement with other NHS organisations, your radiology images and records may be shared with these other organisations as part of determining and providing your care. If you would like to know more about the extent of this sharing, or you wish us not to share at all with another organisation, or have any other concerns about it, please contact a member of staff.

Further information can be found at: [Protecting your information \(GDPR\) \(wsh.nhs.uk\)](https://www.wsh.nhs.uk/protecting-your-information)

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities, please visit the website for AccessAble (formerly DisabledGo)
<https://www.accessable.co.uk>



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