



**“Good Help To Those In Need Since 1824”**

**X Ray Department**

**Bon Secours Hospital**

**Tralee, Co Kerry.**

***Patient Information Leaflet***  
***For a***  
***Follow Through (Small Bowel Meal)***

## Follow Through / Small Bowel Meal

This leaflet will give you the following information:

- What is a Small Bowel Meal?
- How should I prepare?
- What will I experience during and after the procedure?
- Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

### What is a Small Bowel Meal?



A Small Bowel Meal is also known as a Follow Through: it is an x ray examination of the small bowel and stomach.

You will be given a liquid barium substance to drink (two glasses). Approximately thirty minutes after drinking a series of x rays images will be taken to monitor the barium as it travels through the bowel.

Allow a full morning or afternoon for this examination as it can take up to three hours.

### How should I prepare?

- Your doctor will give you detailed instructions on how to prepare for your small bowel meal study.
- The stomach and small intestine must be empty for this examination so please do not eat after midnight on the night before your examination.
- You should inform your doctor of any medications you are taking, if you have any allergies or if you are a diabetic. If you are a diabetic please inform the x ray staff as soon as you arrive at the department and bring your medication and appropriate food with you.

- Please take your usual prescribed medications unless clearly advised otherwise by your doctor.
- Do not bring any valuables to the hospital with you (e.g. jewelry).
- Women of child bearing years should inform their doctor if they think there is any possibility that they are pregnant. Current radiation legislation policy dictates that female patients who have not gone through the menopause must have had a period within ten days before the x ray test.
- A Small Bowel Meal can take between three to four hours; you may wish to bring something to read. You can bring a friend or relative to the department but they will not be able to accompany you in the examination room.

### What will I experience during and after the procedure?

- When you arrive at the X ray department you will be shown to a cubicle to get undressed. You will be provided with a gown and dressing gown.
- You will be given two glasses of a barium liquid to drink. You must endeavor to drink both glasses as to not do so would reduce the quality of the examination.
- The Radiographer will now show you to a room or advise you to return to your hospital room (if you are an in patient). You will be asked to lie on your right side for thirty minutes. After this rest period you will be escorted to the examination room.
- The equipment will consist of an x ray table and x ray camera. The x ray camera is suspended over the table. The Radiologist and Radiographer will remain in the room throughout the test however they will stand behind a lead screen while taking the x ray images. Please talk to the X ray staff if you have any concerns or worries.
- You will be asked to lie either on your back or stomach on the examination table. A series of x ray images will be taken to monitor the progress of the barium through the small bowel.
- You will be asked to take a seat in the waiting room in between x rays. Expect a period of thirty to sixty minutes between each image. Food moves through the intestine at different speeds in different people so this time will vary.
- Once the barium liquid has moved to the large bowel, the Radiologist may want to take some extra images using a special

form of x rays called fluoroscopy allowing us to visualize the bowel in "real time" on a monitor.

- Once the radiologist is satisfied that all the necessary images have been taken you will be escorted back to your cubicle and allowed to leave the department.
- A small bowel meal usually takes between three to four hours.

### After the examination

- You can resume a normal diet and take your medications unless specifically told otherwise by your doctor.
- Your stools may appear white for a day or two - do not worry this is the barium liquid passing from your bowel.
- It is advisable to drink plenty of fluids for two - three days to avoid constipation (until your stools are no longer white in appearance). If you have problems with your heart or water retention you may not be able to drink this amount safely. If in doubt or if you become breathless or your legs appear swollen contact your GP immediately.
- If you experience constipation i.e. you do not have a bowel movement for more than two days after the barium meal or you are experiencing discomfort when going to the bathroom please contact your GP promptly for advice.

### Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

A radiologist will analyze the images and send a report to the doctor who referred you for the small bowel meal. Your doctor / consultant will either contact you with the results within a week or will give you the results on your next appointment. Please contact your doctor's office to clarify any instructions that they may have given you.

*If you have any further questions please contact your doctor or the x ray department (066 7149869).*

*Please cancel your appointment by phone if you are unable to come - preferably at least one day before the examination date.*

## Questions

We understand that there may be questions or queries that you would like to be answered and sometimes you may forget what you want to ask.

The space below has been included for you to write down any questions or queries that you may have.