



“Good Help To Those In Need Since 1824”

X Ray Department

Bon Secours Hospital

Tralee, Co Kerry.

Patient Information Leaflet
For a
Barium Swallow

Barium Swallow

This leaflet will give you the following information:

- What is a Barium Swallow?
- 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 Barium Swallow?



A Barium Swallow is an examination of the pharynx, oesophagus and stomach (the tube and structures that lead to your stomach). This is also referred to as the upper GI tract.

You will be asked to drink a chalky white liquid called barium. We will use a special form of x rays called fluoroscopy allowing us to visualize the upper GI tract in "real time" on a monitor as you swallow the barium liquid.

How Should I Prepare

- Before a barium swallow your stomach must be empty. To achieve this you must fast from midnight on the night before your examination.
- If you are a diabetic and have any concerns regarding fasting for this examination please contact your diabetes doctor or nurse or the doctor who referred you for the barium meal for specific advice and guidelines.
- Please take your usual prescribed medications.
- 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.

- 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.

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 before being escorted into 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 on the x ray table and given a glass of liquid barium to drink. X ray images are taken with you lying flat, on your side and standing upright.
- The Radiologist will monitor the barium liquid as you swallow and take a number of images - you will be given clear instructions on when to swallow or move into a different position by the staff.
- 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 barium swallow is usually completed within 20 minutes.

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 barium swallow. 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.