



Barium swallow / barium meal / follow-through

Your child has been referred for a barium swallow or for a barium meal and follow-through test. This leaflet provides you with some information about what to expect before, during and after the test.

What is a barium swallow / meal and follow-through?

These are tests which look at the oesophagus (food passage), stomach and intestines. Your child will be asked to drink some barium liquid. The barium shows up on x-rays and can be followed around with the x-ray camera to get pictures of the stomach and intestines.

What is barium?

Barium is a harmless white, slightly chalky liquid, which tastes a bit like bubble gum. We can add flavouring if necessary but most children find it fine as it is. Occasionally, we use another liquid which is clear and tastes of orange but usually we use barium. If your child has a favourite beaker or cup, please bring it along and we will use it if we can.

About the test

A parent or carer is welcome to accompany the child into the x-ray room and will be able to stay with them during the procedure. Women who are, or who may be, pregnant will not be able to stay with their child and in this event another family member should also come along to stay with the child. Your child will need to drink the barium while lying down or standing quietly and to turn as requested. It is not painful at all.

A barium swallow or meal usually takes less than 20 minutes.

A barium follow-through takes longer, perhaps 1-3 hours, as we have to wait for the barium to pass through the intestines. Some of this time will be in the x-ray room and some will be in the small waiting area just outside. You may like to bring things to do or to read to help pass the time while you are waiting.

On the day of the test

It is important that your child's stomach is empty for the test, so it is important that you follow these instructions before the appointment:

- **Babies who are bottle or breast fed:** Normal feeds until 1 hour before the appointment, then nothing by mouth.
- **Young children up to 3 years:** Normal diet until 2 hours before the test. Clear fluids may be drunk until 1 hour before the appointment, then nothing to eat or drink until after the test.
- **Children who are 3 or older:** Normal diet until 4 hours before the appointment. Clear fluids (water or weak squash) are allowed until 1 hour before the appointment, then nothing to eat or drink until after the test.

All children and babies should have nothing to eat or drink for the last 1 hour before the appointment.

After the examination

After the examination your child will be able to return to normal activities and diet. Their stools may be white for a couple of days while the barium passes through; this is quite normal. The barium may cause some constipation in the days after the examination and it is a good idea for your child to drink plenty of fluid to prevent this.

The radiologist (x-ray specialist) is not normally able to provide immediate results and will write a report on the x-ray pictures for the consultant who requested the investigation. The report is usually ready within 48 hrs. Your consultant will be able to give you the result.

Contacting us

If you require any advice about these instructions, contact the X-ray nursing staff on 0118 322 8368 (Mon-Fri 8.30am-5pm).

Kempton Day Bed Unit: 0118 322 7512 / 8754 (Mon-Fri 7am-7pm).

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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