NHS
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Coming to hospital for a videofluoroscopy

A speech and language therapist has asked you have a video test called a 'videofluoroscopy' to check how you swallow. This leaflet explains what to expect when you come to the hospital for this test.

What is a videofluoroscopy?



A videofluoroscopy is a moving x-ray (picture) of a person's swallow.

It looks at what happens when different types of food and drink pass through your mouth and throat and into the top part of your food pipe on its way to your tummy.

Why do I need a videofluoroscopy?

A speech and language therapist (called an SLT) has already assessed your swallow. They have recommended that you now have this test to understand your swallow in more detail.

The test is done by a specialist SLT and a healthcare professional from the Radiology (X-ray) Department.

A videofluoroscopy is not the same as a barium swallow test. A videofluoroscopy looks at how the swallow and top part of the food pipe works, whereas a barium swallow looks at how the lower part of the food pipe and tummy works.



Where do I go for the videofluoroscopy?

This test is done at the Royal Berkshire Hospital. You will need to go to the Radiology (X-ray) Department which is on level 1 in Centre Block.

You can bring your friend or carer with you to help you feel more confident.

When you arrive, you will need to tell the receptionist, who will check you in and ask you to wait on the seats in the Radiology corridor.



How long does the test take?

The whole appointment usually lasts between 30-45 minutes.

Do I need to prepare for it?

No. Please eat and drink as normal, including any gastrostomy tube feeds.

Do not stop taking any medications that you normally take.

What happens during the test?

You will need to sit upright in a chair (or your wheelchair if you use one) for the test.



It is important you sit as still as possible during the tests so that the healthcare professionals can see what is going on.

If you need help to sit upright, this will be discussed before the appointment in case we have equipment that can be used.

Your friend or carer or parent can stand right next to you during the test but they will have to wear a special Radiology ‘coat’ for protection while the x-ray takes place. Please let us know beforehand if you want someone to stay with you during the test.

You will be given food and drink that is mixed with barium (a dense powder that shows up on the x-rays). This helps us to see the food and drink as it passes through your mouth and throat. Barium has a white, chalky texture with a sweet taste.



Sometimes, you may also be asked to drink a liquid with a bitter taste. This will not hurt you.

During the test, lots of x-rays will be taken. It will not hurt and there are no needles involved!

After the videofluoroscopy

After your test you can eat and drink as normal (either by mouth or by tube feed if you have that).

Barium can cause constipation (hard poo), so please drink lots of water or watery drinks and eat lots of fibre (fruit/vegetables) for a few days after the test to avoid this.

If you drive, you can drive home after the examination, as barium does not affect your ability to drive.

Results

A report of your test results will be sent to the healthcare professional who asked you to have the test as well as to your SLT and your GP. The SLT will go through the report with you to explain what happens next.

Are there any risks with this test?

- This test involves X-rays which use radiation. Radiation is energy that moves in the form of waves or tiny particles through space or objects (including bodies). It is a natural part of our environment coming from the sun, rocks, and soil, as well as human-made sources like medical X-rays. The amount of radiation is kept to a minimum and is equivalent to the amount of background radiation you naturally receive over 3-5 weeks.
- Barium can cause constipation so you should drink plenty of fluids after the test to wash the barium out of your system. Your poo may appear slightly whitish from the barium. It is very rare for barium to cause an allergic reaction.
- If you have an iodine-based drink during the test, it is important we know if you have iodine allergy beforehand so we can avoid it.
- If food or drink goes the wrong way, we will tell you to have a big cough to help clear it.
- **This test should not be performed if there is any chance that you might be pregnant** as radiation is potentially harmful to the baby. Females of childbearing age should have their appointment within 10 days of the first day of their last period, to avoid being X-rayed in early pregnancy.

Further information

www.patient.co.uk/health/Barium-Swallow-/-Meal-/-Follow-Through.htm
Radiology Department Tel 0118 322 7991

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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Approved Radiology CG: November 2026
Next review due: November 2028