

# Having a barium meal and follow through

## Introduction

The examination is conducted by a radiologist (specialist X-ray doctor) or a specialist radiographer (X-ray professional).

A relative or friend can accompany you, although for safety reasons they may have to wait in the waiting area during the procedure. No childcare facilities are available.

## What is a barium meal and follow through?

A barium meal and follow through is a test designed to look at your small bowel.

## Why do I need this test?

Your referring doctor should have explained why you need this test to you. If you do not know why you need the test, please contact your GP or referring doctor before your appointment date.

## How long will it take?

The investigation should take about 45 minutes, although you may be asked to stay longer if additional x-rays are required.

## Preparation

You must have only clear fluids for 24 hours prior to this test (i.e. clear soups, Oxo, Bovril, black tea/coffee, Lucozade, fizzy soft drinks, fruit squash, fruit juices (without bits), or water). This is so that your bowels are completely clear from solids. **DO NOT** drink milk or milk based products.

**Please bring with you: your appointment letter and a dressing gown if you wish.**

## What does it involve?

You may be asked to change into a gown before the test. During the examination, you will be asked to swallow some barium liquid. It is this liquid that shows up using X-rays. The radiologist or specialist radiographer will be taking X-ray images throughout. You may be asked to wait in the waiting room during your test, so please bring something with you to read. It is not a painful procedure.

### After the examination

You will be able to eat and drink as normal. Barium is not absorbed by the body and can cause constipation so please drink plenty of fluids and eat more fibre for a few days after the test to avoid this.

### Results

A report of your examination will be sent to your referring doctor; if this is a hospital specialist, then the specialist will contact your GP with the report.

### Are there any risks with this test?

This test involves 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 constipate you and you are advised to drink plenty of fluids after the test to wash out the barium from your system. It may turn your stools slightly white but this is the barium passing through.

Barium is not absorbed by the body and so it is very rare for an allergic reaction to occur with a barium test.

This test should not be performed if there is any chance you might be pregnant as radiation is potentially harmful to the baby.

If you weigh over 31stone or 197kg please contact us by telephoning 0118 322 7991.

### Further information

[www.patient.co.uk/health/Barium-Swallow-/-Meal-/-Follow-Through.htm](http://www.patient.co.uk/health/Barium-Swallow-/-Meal-/-Follow-Through.htm)

More information is available on the Trust website visit [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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