

Having a barium video swallow

Introduction

The examination is conducted by a radiographer (X-ray professional) and a speech and language therapist.

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 video swallow?

This is an investigation to test your swallowing function. You may be experiencing difficulties in swallowing certain foods or liquids or speech. This test is designed to look at how the muscles work while you eat or drink.

Why do I need this test?

The speech and language therapists should have seen you prior to the appointment being made and will have explained the need for this type of test being done. If this is not the case, please contact us by telephoning 0118 322 7991.

How long will it take?

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

Preparation

You must have nothing to eat or drink for 2 hours before your appointment.

Please bring with you: your appointment letter. You may have been asked to bring certain foodstuffs or drinks, please remember these. There is not usually any need for you to change for this examination, but please try to avoid wearing neck jewellery, facial piercings or upper clothing with metal work (i.e. zips, press studs).

What does it involve?

During the examination, you may be asked to swallow different liquids and solids mixed with barium (a special fluid that shows up on X-rays). The specialist radiographer will watch the barium on a TV monitor and take X-ray pictures and the speech and language

therapist may ask you to try different techniques, such as putting your chin on your chest to help you swallow. It is not a painful procedure.

After the barium video swallow

You are advised to try to increase your fluid and fibre intake slightly for a few days after the test to avoid constipation. You may eat and drink as per the recommendations following the test.

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?

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.

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 20 stone or 127kg please contact us.

Further information

www.patient.co.uk/health/Barium-Swallow-/-Meal-/-Follow-Through.htm

More information is available on the Trust website visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

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

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