



# Paediatric barium swallow and/or meal

Information for patients

## What is a barium meal and follow through?

It is an X-ray study of the oesophagus, stomach and small bowel. Barium examinations are one of the easiest ways of imaging these areas and are used to investigate possible causes of a wide variety of symptoms.

The doctor who sent your child for this examination will have explained why it is needed.

## What preparation is needed?

To ensure good quality images it is important for your child's stomach to be empty before this test.

We ask that your child is not given lunch on the appointment day and stops drinking before the appointment time as shown below;

**Children under 1 year** Do not eat or drink anything for one hour before the appointment

**Children ages 1 or over** Do not eat or drink anything for two hours before the appointment

If your child will drink more easily from their own bottle or beaker/cup please bring it with you to use during the test.

### Symptoms

If there have been changes in your child's health since they saw the doctor who sent you for this test please contact them to let them know.

## Who will be there?

In the room there will be a consultant radiologist and a radiographer.

One parent or carer will be able to accompany the child in the examination room. They will need to wear a protective rubberised lead jacket or to remain behind the control panel screen. If you are pregnant you will not be allowed in the room. Please note that we don't have the facilities to look after other young children.

## What does it involve?

Your child may be undressed with the examination done whilst wearing a vest with no poppers/or just a nappy or a gown will be given to change into depending on your child's age.

Your child will be asked to lie on the X-ray table and encouraged to drink some barium from a bottle or cup. Images are taken by X-ray as the child swallows the liquid. To ensure all areas can be examined the child may be moved from side to side.

## Are there any risks?

### Radiation

We are all exposed to natural background radiation every day of our lives. Each X-ray examination gives us a small additional dose. Everything is done within the X-ray department to minimise this.

### Barium

Barium can occasionally go down the 'wrong way' to your lungs. Normally this does not cause any problems. Occasionally treatment with physiotherapy and possibly antibiotics is needed. You are watched carefully during the test to avoid this happening.

## After the examination

Once the examination is finished you are free to leave. Your child can return to their normal diet.

The white barium paste will make your child's stools appear white, possibly for a few days. It can also cause constipation so we advise that you ensure that your child drinks plenty of fluids through the day.

You may wish to bring a change of clothes in case any of the barium spills.

## When do we get the results?

If the examination was requested by your family doctor (GP) then the results will be sent to them. We aim to do this within five days.

If the scan was requested by a hospital consultant, the result will be sent to them and will be available at your next appointment.

## Further Information

If you have any concerns about your examination please contact us (Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4pm) and ask to speak to a senior radiographer or nurse.

01737 768511 Ext 2956/6018

## Contact Us

Surrey and Sussex Health Care NHS Trust  
Diagnostic Imaging Department  
East Surrey Hospital  
Redhill Surrey RH1 5RH  
Tel: 01737 231604

[www.surreyandsussex.nhs.uk](http://www.surreyandsussex.nhs.uk)

## Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Telephone: 01737 231 958

Email: [\*\*pals@sash.nhs.uk\*\*](mailto:pals@sash.nhs.uk)

Write to: PALS, East Surrey Hospital  
Redhill, Surrey RH1 5RH

You can also ask a member of staff to contact PALS on your behalf.

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This information can be made available in other languages and formats, including in larger text. Contact 01737 231 958 for help.

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