

## Barium Meal – A Patients Guide

### What is a Barium Meal?

This test is to look at the oesophagus (gullet), stomach and duodenum. This test aims to look for problems such as narrowing, hiatus hernias, tumours, reflux, ulcers and polyps. Your doctor will have explained why you need to have this done.

Barium is a white substance which shows up the outline of the bowel on X-ray pictures, acting like a temporary dye.

The barium X-ray machine is a table which can tilt, with an arm coming across which delivers or detects the X-rays. Within the room there will usually be a Radiologist and a Radiographer.

Barium Meal examination rooms are sometimes also referred to as Screening or Fluoroscopy rooms.

### Before your scan

Please have **Nothing to Eat or Drink for 6 hours** prior to your examination. Please contact the department on 01702 385820 if you are diabetic.

Please bring a list of any medications you are taking, and a dressing gown.

If you are prone to choking on your food, please tell the staff about it when you come for your test.

### What happens when I arrive?

On arrival in the X-ray department, you will be asked to change into a gown. Your clothes will be placed in a bag and brought with you to the examination room. When the time comes for your test, you will be taken into the X-ray room.

### What does it involve?

The Radiologist or Radiographer will talk to you about exactly what is going to happen.

You will be asked to drink some white liquid, with a chalky texture, containing barium. The liquid is usually mildly fruit flavoured and you will be asked to sip one or two mouthfuls at a time.

You may be asked to swallow some bicarbonate powder and citric acid before swallowing the barium. These 'fizz up' when they mix in the stomach and make some gas. The gas helps give more defined images.

X-ray images will be taken with you standing up and laying down. Later on in the examination you may be asked to turn over onto your stomach. If you think you will have trouble moving about on the X-ray table please tell us as soon as possible so we can make arrangements to help you.

The Radiologist may be able to tell you what the examination has shown. More often the Radiologist will want to carefully analyse the images later and provide a detailed report to the referring consultant or GP.

The examination will take approximately 30 minutes.

**After the examination.**

You will be able to dress and leave the department. You should be able to go home as soon as the test is finished. Some people feel a little sickly for a few hours afterwards. You can eat normally straight after any barium test.

The barium may make you constipated. Therefore, to help prevent constipation have lots to drink for a day or so to flush the barium out of your gut. If you are able to, eat plenty of fruit for a day or so.

**Further information**

If you have any concerns or questions about your Barium Meal please telephone the 1<sup>st</sup> Floor X-ray Reception Desk on 01702 385280.