

What is a Barium Swallow/Meal?

A Barium Swallow / Meal is an imaging procedure to outline upper end of the digestive tract, the oesophagus, stomach and occasionally the first part of the small bowel. Barium sulphate is a white chalky drink with a similar consistency to a thick milkshake; is used to demonstrate these organs which are not normally visible on ordinary x-rays.

Who is in the room during this procedure?

- A Radiologist or Radiology Registrar (a fully qualified doctor who is specialising to become a Radiologist)
- Medical Radiation Technologist/s (MRT)
- There may also be a student MRT assisting the MRT during the procedure.

You are welcome to bring a support person along to your appointment, however as this procedure involves the use of X-rays we recommend that they wait in the waiting/ changing room during the procedure.

How do I prepare for a Barium Swallow/Meal?

On the day before your procedure do not have anything to eat or drink after 8.00pm.

You should continue to take all current medication.

What happens before the procedure?

You will be asked to and change into a hospital gown. You will be asked to remove any objects that show up on X-rays such as earrings, chains, clothing containing metal such as bra and trousers with zipper.

The MRT will explain to you what is going to happen and show you into the room. You are welcome to ask questions at any time.

What happens during the procedure?

You will stand with your back against an upright table in front of the x-ray camera. The MRT will then give you a cup containing barium to drink.

You will be given instruction about how and when to swallow the barium as the examination proceeds. You may be asked to turn into different positions or move your arms during the procedure. Often it is necessary to lie the bed flat and take a series of images with you lying down. You may need to roll onto your side and stomach for some of these images.

You may also be asked to swallow some fizzy granules which make gas in your stomach. These could make you want to burp. It is important that you try not to.



Throughout the procedure you will be given instructions on what is happening.

The MRT or the doctor will be in the room with you at all times if you have questions or need help.

It will take approximately 20 minutes.

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What happens after the procedure?

- If you were given the gas granules you may feel slightly bloated until the air in your stomach works its way out.
- You will be shown to the changing room and given a mouthwash to rinse the barium from your mouth (you may also wish to bring your own toothbrush and toothpaste).
- It is possible to become constipated after drinking Barium so it is important that you drink plenty of fluids after the test to help flush it out. You may also wish to increase the amount of fibre that you eat for a couple of days. Bran or prunes can be a great source of fibre.
- Your stools may appear white or funny coloured for a day or so afterwards, this is normal.
- As barium is a heavy material, it may leave a white residue in the toilet bowl; an extra flush of the toilet should clear this.

What are the risks of a Barium Swallow/Meal?

A Barium Swallow / Meal is generally considered to be a safe test, as barium sulphate is a harmless material.

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- Any new food or drink carries a small risk that you may be allergic to one of the ingredients. The risk is considered very low for this procedure. If you have any allergies, please inform the radiology staff on the day of your procedure.
- All x-ray examinations involve exposure to radiation in varying amounts. The length and level of exposure to radiation from x-rays in medical procedures is strictly controlled and kept to the minimum possible.
- As x-rays can be harmful to the unborn child it is a legal requirement to ask all female patients of child bearing age if they are pregnant. All female patients between the ages of 11 and 60

will be asked in private if there is any chance they could be pregnant.

How do I find out the results of this procedure?

The radiologist will not be able to provide a result immediately.

They will study the images obtained and will write a formal report and send the results to the doctor that referred you for this test. A copy will also be sent to your GP.

Results are usually available to your doctor within 2 weeks.

Contact us or visit <http://www.healthpoint.co.nz>

(select CCDHB and Radiology)

General

There are no lockable facilities in Radiology. We strongly recommend that any valuables are left at home.

Please be aware that CCDHB does not take responsibility for any loss or damage of personal property belonging to patients whilst on CCDHB premises.