

Patient information

Barium Swallow Meal – Appointment Details

Imaging Department

Before Your Examination

It is very important that your stomach is completely empty of food and drink. You should have nothing to eat or drink for eight hours before your appointment time.

If you have diabetes and take tablets or insulin and have not been given a morning appointment, please contact the X-ray department as soon as you receive this appointment.

Any alternative treatments or procedures will have been discussed at your initial consultation with your referring practitioner.

What is a Barium Swallow / Meal?

A Barium Swallow is an X-ray examination of the oesophagus (food pipe) using white barium liquid. A Barium Meal is an X-ray examination of the oesophagus and stomach using white barium liquid.

One or both of these areas will be examined depending on your symptoms. They are carried out by a Radiologist (a doctor who specialises in X-rays) or Specialist Radiographer.

What are the benefits of having a Barium Swallow / Meal?

This procedure will help us make the correct diagnosis so we will be able to give you the correct treatment.

The risks of having a Barium Swallow / Meal include –

Patients of a Child-bearing Age: X-rays may be harmful to an unborn child, especially in the early stages of pregnancy. If you are pregnant or there is any possibility of you being pregnant, please contact the X-ray department before your appointment.

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

An injection of Buscopan may be used during this procedure. It is given to make your stomach muscles relax. This injection will make your mouth feel dry, and you may have blurred vision. These effects usually disappear within half an hour. However, you should not drive until your vision has returned.

Other eye problems, such as pain or redness are rare. However, if they do occur please urgently contact St Paul's Primary Care here at the Royal Liverpool Hospital on Tel: 0151 706 3949 for advice.

Tell them you have had a barium meal test and an injection of Buscopan.

If you are worried about any of these risks, please speak to your Doctor or a member of their team.

What to bring with you

You may wish to bring with you a dressing gown, slippers and book. A member of your family or friend could also come with you.

The Examination

- You will be taken to a changing room and asked to undress and put on a gown. When it is your turn, you will be taken to the X-ray room.
- The Radiologist may decide you need the injection, if so this will be given in your arm. This will relax the muscles in your stomach.
- You may be asked to swallow some small granules. You will then be asked to drink a cup of flavoured white liquid called barium.
- X-ray pictures will be taken by the Radiologist while you are standing and lying in different positions on the X-ray table.
- The examination usually takes between ten to twenty minutes.
- Very occasionally you may need a delayed film, you will be asked to wait in the department for about an hour. This is so we can check the emptying of your stomach and for the barium to pass into the small bowel.

After the examination

- When your examination has been completed you will be able to eat and drink normally, and you can start to take any of your usual medication.
- The barium can cause constipation for a day or so afterwards. This can be avoided by drinking plenty of fluids. You may notice that your motions are paler than usual – this is due to the barium.
- If you are allowed unlimited drinks, an extra pint of fluid per day over the next couple of days will help pass the barium.

Results

Your results are sent to the doctor who asked for this test to be carried out. This may be the hospital doctor or your GP.

Cancellations

If you are unable to keep this appointment, please let us know as soon as possible and we will arrange another for you. If you fail to cancel and do not attend you will be discharged back to the care of the referring clinician.

Transport

If your medical condition or mobility needs mean that you cannot get to your appointment any other way and you require transport you should ring the Patient Transport Services (PTS) who will arrange one for you.

Tel: 0151 706 4676

Car parking

Car parking for visitors and patients is available at the Q-Park multi-storey car park located on Prescot Street, L6 1LY.

For those with walking difficulties, there is a shuttle bus service operating between Q-Park and The Royal Liverpool University Hospital. The bus operates Monday to Friday, 6am-8pm. If you find you are waiting a while for the bus, the driver's number is displayed on the Q-Park exit.

Parking for Blue Badge holders is free at the Mount Vernon Street entrance. However, parking is limited, and you are advised to allow sufficient time for parking as you may need to redirect to the nearby Q-Park.

Please bring this leaflet with you when you attend the X-ray department.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

If you have any further questions, or require further information, please contact the Radiology Appointments Office:

Tel: 0151 706 2759

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All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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