

## Barium Meal

### What is a barium meal?

A barium meal is an examination of the anatomy of the oesophagus, stomach and duodenum to display any abnormality. The examination uses an x-ray contrast called barium to demonstrate the anatomy of these regions.

### What preparation is required?

You will need to prepare for the examination by fasting from foods and fluids for at least eight hours before your appointment. This ensures that the stomach is empty as any food or fluid may give misleading results. In addition, you will be requested to refrain from smoking for eight hours before your appointment as smoking causes the stomach lining to secrete fluid, which reduces the quality and accuracy of the examination.

### What documentation is required?

Bring your referral and any relevant previous xrays for comparison. Also bring your Medicare card, pension or healthcare card or Veteran's Affairs card details if applicable.

### What you need to tell us prior to your appointment?

At the time of arranging your appointment, please advise us if you have diabetes. You must contact us prior to your appointment.

Please advise us if you are pregnant.

Please do not take your normal medication before the procedure - bring your medication with you to take after the examination.

### What will happen during the examination?

Prior to the examination you will be asked to change into a gown, and then directed to drink a glass of creamy, chalky liquid known as barium which enables us to see your gastrointestinal tract on xrays. There will also be a very small amount (20mls) of 2 other liquids containing Sodium bicarbonate and Citric acid that will make gas in your stomache to make the images easier to read.

An injection may then be given to stop the stomach contracting and ensure image quality. This injection may cause temporary blurring of vision, and if this is the case you should not drive a car until your vision has returned to normal. It would be ideal to organise someone to drive you home.

### What will happen during the examination? Cont...

You will be asked to assume various physical positions which will allow various images to be taken from different angles. While being xrayed it is important to follow directions and hold your breath when asked, to ensure that the xrays are not blurred.

Note, some patients may experience a bloated feeling during the examination, however, this sensation should pass fairly quickly.

### How long will the examination take?

The examination will take approximately 30 minutes, but if an examination of the small intestine has been specifically requested the procedure may take a further 1 to 4 hours.

### What can you expect after your examination?

There should be no ill effects after the examination although your bowel action may well be white for some days. Some patients may experience constipation for a few days afterwards as the barium passes through the bowel. Drinking fluid and consuming a high fibre diet will assist with this process, and a mild laxative may be useful if symptoms persist.

### Are there any risks?

You will receive a dose of x-ray radiation. However, the benefits of detecting disease are believed to outweigh any potential risks from receiving such a dose.

Sometimes barium can cause constipation, this can be minimized by drinking plenty of water in the days following the Barium Meal.

Please, however, advise the Radiographer if you are, or think you may be, pregnant.

### What happens with the images and report?

After your examination you may be given a copy of the most pertinent images from your study. A report will be provided directly to your referring doctor. We will store digital copies of all studies and reports on our secure patient information system for comparison with any future examinations.

For branch contact details and other services, please visit our website [ncrg.com.au](http://ncrg.com.au)