

Barium meal

What is a barium meal procedure?

A barium meal is a radiographic examination of the upper gastrointestinal tract and may include oesophagus, stomach, duodenum and small bowel. These procedures study the different functions and form of the oesophagus, stomach and small bowel. Barium is a white, chalky mixture mixed with water designed to coat the lining and folds within the stomach.

What preparation is required?

You will need to fast for eight hours prior to any barium procedures. Continue taking any medication with a sip of water if needed.

You will be required to remove all clothing, except underpants, as well as any earrings or jewellery around your neck. You will be asked to change into a hospital gown. Alternatively you may wear comfortable clothing such as tracksuit pants and a plain T-shirt (any clothing without metal zips, studs or metallic decoration).

What is involved and how long will this take?

Barium swallow (+/- meal)

You will be required to swallow barium mixture from a cup. The radiologist will give you instructions when to do this. X-ray images are taken to follow the barium as it passes down to the oesophagus and into the stomach. The radiologist will take images with you standing upright, facing the front and from the side. A barium swallow will take about 5-10 minutes to complete. If a barium meal is performed in conjunction with a barium swallow, then it can take approximately 20 minutes.

Barium meal

You will be required to swallow barium mixture from a cup. The radiologist will give you instructions when to do this. X-ray images are taken to follow the barium as it passes down to the oesophagus and into the stomach. Sometimes you will need to swallow small cups of liquid to form gas in the stomach. You will be asked to hold the gas in and not burp. The radiologist will take images with you standing upright, lying down, facing the front and from the side. You will be asked to roll around to coat the stomach with the barium. A barium meal procedure will take approximately 10-15mins to complete.

Barium follow-through

You will be required to drink 2-3 cups of barium mixture. X-ray images of the abdomen are taken at intervals (sometimes up to 60 minutes) to follow the barium through the small bowel. Please feel free to bring a book, magazine, laptop or iPad, as you will be required to stay within the department for the duration of the examination. Wi-Fi access can be arranged for your use. A barium follow through can take 2-6 hours.

Are there any side effects?

Some people can experience an upset stomach or constipation following the procedure when required to drink barium. It is important to drink plenty of fluids following the procedure to wash the barium through the stomach and the bowel. Please alert a staff member if you feel any nausea. This is not an allergic reaction.

How do I get my results?

Digital images are immediately available to your doctor and your records will be kept permanently. This occurs through a system called PACS. **If a priority report is requested it will be issued within two hours and faxed or emailed to your doctor, however this can sometimes take up to 24 hours.**

If your referring doctor wants to see you on the day of your examination, please advise the reception staff when you arrive for your appointment, so the appropriate information can be made available for you to take to your doctor.

How much will this cost?

Please ask reception staff of the cost involved at the time of booking your appointment.

Important

It is important to let us know when you make your booking if you are or think you may be pregnant or are breastfeeding.

It is important to bring with you your referral, previous x-rays and any other tests (only if previous ones were **not** done at Cabrini or I-MED).

Questions

For more information or to make an appointment, please contact Cabrini Medical Imaging using the relevant number below.