

# Barium Meal X-Ray

## What is a Barium Meal?

A barium meal is an X-ray examination of the upper part of the digestive system (oesophagus, stomach and the first part of the small bowel or duodenum). The stomach must be completely empty for this examination which is why you must starve for so long beforehand.

Before the examination you will be asked to change from your own clothes into a gown.

In the X-ray room, the radiologist or radiographer will introduce him or herself to you and will usually start by giving you a small injection into a vein in your arm. This prevents spasm of the stomach muscles and allows us to take sharper X-ray pictures. The injection is not a sedative.

You will then be asked to swallow some powder, washed down with lemon juice. This makes gas in your stomach which helps produce better X-ray images. Once you are standing on the X-ray machine, you will be given the mug of barium and the radiologist will tell you when and how much to drink. They will watch your stomach filling on a TV screen and will X-ray you in various positions, standing and lying. When these have been done, the test is usually complete and you may start to eat and drink normally again.

Barium is a heavy white liquid. It has a 'fruit' flavouring added and is not unpleasant to taste but has a slightly chalky texture. Your stomach may feel very heavy after drinking it.

Prior to the examination you will be asked not to eat or drink for a period of time.

You may eat and drink normally after the examination. You may notice that your bowel motion is a little pale for a couple of days after the test. This is perfectly normal.

**The preparation will be confirmed in your appointment letter.**

**If you normally take any medicines in the morning in tablet form, please do not take them at the usual time. Bring them with you to take after the test.**