

# Barium Swallow

This brochure tells you about a barium swallow. It includes the benefits and the risks, what happens before, during and after the procedure.

This document should not replace the advice of your relevant health care professional.

## What is a Barium Swallow?

- A **barium swallow** is an examination of your oesophagus, the tube between your mouth and stomach.
- You will be asked to drink a liquid that is visible on x-ray (Barium), to see what happens when you **swallow**.
- The procedure will take place in the x-ray department and usually takes approximately 30 minutes

## What happens during a Barium Swallow?

- The procedure will be performed by a radiologist (a doctor who uses x-rays to diagnose illnesses).
- You may be asked to swallow a small amount of powder that creates gas, so that the oesophagus can be seen more clearly.
- You will then be asked to stand on a small platform by the x-ray machine and asked to swallow mouthfuls of the liquid while x-rays are taken.
- The table will then be tilted so you are lying down and more images can be taken. You may be asked to lie on your front and drink some more barium.
- When enough pictures have been taken, the examination is complete.

## Preparing for your Barium Swallow?

<b>✘ Don't</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Eat or drink for four hours before the examination</li> <li>2. Smoke or chew gum for four hours before the examination</li> </ol>
<b>✔ Do</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bring you Medicare card with you.</li> <li>2. Bring your request form if you have it.</li> <li>3. Bring any previous shoulder imaging with you from the last 2 years.</li> <li>4. If you are, or could be, pregnant then please tell your health practitioner or radiographer.</li> <li>5. Arrange for someone to drive you home.</li> <li>6. Ask if you need a medical certificate.</li> <li>7. Leave all Jewellery and valuables at home.</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Austin Health does not take responsibility for your personal possessions.</b></p>



Austin Health acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land we work on and pays its respects to Elders past, present and emerging. Austin Health celebrates, values and includes people of all backgrounds, genders, sexualities, cultures, bodies and abilities.

### How long does it take?

- The procedure takes about 30 minutes.
- Expect to be in the Radiology Department for at least 1 hour.

### What are the benefits?

### What are the risks

#### Radiation

- There is some exposure to radiation during the procedure because x-rays are used. However, as this is a low dose examination, exposure to radiation is kept to a minimum.

#### Aspiration

- There is a small risk that some of the barium goes the wrong way into your lungs. This does not usually cause any problems but, for a small number of people, chest physiotherapy may be necessary.

### After care

- No special care is necessary after the procedure and you can return to your usual daily activities. Try to drink plenty of fluids.
- Your bowel motions may be pale in colour for a short period due to the barium.

### Results

- Your results will be sent in a report to the Health Practitioner who referred you for this test.
- Please make a follow up appointment with your Health Practitioner to discuss your results and further management plan.

### Further information

- It is important that you have received enough information about the procedure.
  - Some of your questions should have been answered in this factsheet, but maybe not all
- If you have any questions before or after the examination, please speak with your health care providers.

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