Barium Swallow

A barium swallow is an x-ray test that checks for problems in your throat, esophagus, stomach and small intestine. You drink white chalky liquid called barium to get pictures on x-rays.

*If you are breastfeeding, pregnant, or think you might be, tell the staff before the x-rays are taken.*

**Arrive on time for your test.** The test takes about 15 to 45 minutes. You may need to stay for up to 6 hours for more x-rays if your small intestine is being looked at.

**To Prepare**
- Do not eat or drink anything, including water, after midnight before the test.
- Do not smoke after midnight before the test.
- If you need to take your medicines the morning of the test, take them with sips of water only.

**During the Test**
- You will be given a hospital gown to wear and be told to remove all jewelry.
- You are given 1 or 2 barium drinks. The drink tastes chalky and may be flavored.
- X-rays are taken as the barium flows down your esophagus into your stomach. You may need to stand or lie on a table for the x-rays. The
table is moved in many positions. As you move, the barium coats the inside of your stomach and intestines. More x-rays are taken as the barium moves through your body.

- If you are to have x-rays of your small intestine, it may take up to 6 hours to complete your test.

After the Test

- Your stool will be light colored for 2 to 3 days after the test.
- Drink 6 to 8 glasses of liquids after the test. This will help remove the barium from your body and keep you from being constipated.
- Test results are sent to your doctor. Your doctor will share the results with you.

Call your doctor if you have:

- Barium in your stool 3 days after the test
- Thin stool or notice a change in your bowel habits
- Stool that is not normal in 3 days
- Pain in your lower abdomen or stomach

Call your doctor right away if you:

- Have trouble breathing
- Cannot stop vomiting
- See blood when you vomit or have blood in your stool

Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.

2006 – 11/2011 Health Information Translations

Unless otherwise stated, user may print or download information from www.healthinfotranslations.org for personal, non-commercial use only. The medical information found on this website should not be used in place of a consultation with your doctor or other health care provider. You should always seek the advice of your doctor or other qualified health care provider before you start or stop any treatment or with any questions you may have about a medical condition. The Ohio State University Medical Center, Mount Carmel Health System, OhioHealth and Nationwide Children’s Hospital are not responsible for injuries or damages you may incur as a result of your stopping medical treatment or your failure to obtain medical treatment.