

Barium Swallow / Upper GI Series / Small Bowel Follow Through

Patient Information Sheet

A Barium Swallow is a special x-ray examination of your esophagus (tube from mouth to stomach).

An Upper GI (Gastrointestinal) Series is an x-ray examination of your esophagus, stomach and duodenum (first part of small intestine).

A Barium Swallow or an Upper GI Series will take about 30 minutes.

A Small Bowel Series or Follow Through examination will show the small intestine more closely. The entire follow through exam can take between 2 to 4 hours, possibly longer.

For all of these procedures, images are produced using a special type of x-ray called fluoroscopy.

Instructions for patients

- Do not eat or drink anything after midnight on the night before the examination. If oral medication must be taken, take it with a small sip of water.
- You will be asked to change into a hospital gown for the examination. You will also be asked to remove jewelry.
- Women should inform their healthcare provider if there is any possibility of pregnancy. Please advise the technologist prior to the start of the procedure, whether or not you may be pregnant.

How the procedure is performed

The procedure will be performed by a Radiologist (specialized medical doctor) and a Medical Radiation Technologist. You will be asked to drink liquid barium that looks like a light-colored milkshake. You may also be asked to swallow gas granules (similar to Alka Seltzer) which produces gas in the stomach to help produce sharper images. The Radiologist will watch the barium pass through the digestive tract.



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What happens after the procedure?

- Resume your normal diet
- You may also take medications, as normal, unless otherwise instructed by your healthcare provider.
- It is normal for your stool to appear light in color (gray or white) as a result of the liquid barium.
- You are encouraged to increase your fluid intake for the next two days as barium may cause temporary constipation.
- If you experience significant changes in your bowel habits, you should contact your healthcare provider.

When and how will I know the results?

Please call as soon as possible to make a follow up appointment with your referring healthcare provider, to discuss the results of this procedure.

