

Division of Imaging

Information for Patients

Barium Follow Through Examination

What is a Barium Follow Through?

A barium follow through examination is an x-ray examination used to show your stomach and small intestine.

It is difficult to see the small bowel on ordinary x-rays but we can show them by using barium. Barium is a harmless white chalky liquid. We will ask you to drink one litre or more of the barium liquid to fill your stomach and small bowel.

What happens during Barium Follow Through examination?

The Barium Follow Through examination will be carried out by a radiologist (a doctor specialising in X-ray examinations) or a radiographer.

- You will be asked to change into a hospital gown.
- You might be asked to remove certain items of clothing and jewellery.
- The person completing the procedure will ask you to confirm some details including date of birth and pregnancy status.

We will ask you to drink several cupsful of dilute barium. We will then take x-rays at 20-minute intervals using different sets of equipment. This is so we can follow the barium as it moves along your small bowel.

The person performing the examination will provide you with instructions on what is needed, and it is often very important that you remain still to ensure the best images are obtained.

Will I feel any pain?

You cannot feel the x-rays so the procedure itself is painless.

However, it is important to get you into the correct position. Holding this position / lying on a table may, for some people, feel uncomfortable, but for the majority of patients this is not the case.

Are there any risks with this examination?

Radiation risk

x-rays are of a type of radiation known as ionising radiation. The dose that you get from a medical exposure is very low and risks are minimal.

The radiation is similar in strength to other sources of natural radiation that people are exposed to everyday without even realising.

Contrast risk

We might need to give you contrast dye, the radiographers will complete a checklist to ensure it is safe for you to have the contrast and you will be asked to sign this form as a consent, the specific side effects are documented on the checklists that you complete.

The contrast dye that is sometimes used can cause allergic reactions however the staff available will be checking for any risks before we proceed.

Is there anything I need to inform you of before I attend for my appointment?

Pregnancy:

Radiation can be harmful for an unborn baby. If you are or think you may be pregnant you must tell the radiographer before the examination.

If you have diabetes please contact the department using the contact information on your appointment letter before following the below preparation instructions.

How do I prepare for my Barium Follow Through examination?

The day before the examination you should eat only low fibre (low residue) foods. You can eat foods such as:

Foods to be allowed

- **lean** meat and white fish
- **dairy** produce without added fruit or nuts
- **white** bread, **white** rice, **white** pasta
- **plain** biscuits such as 'Rich Tea', crackers and cake without fruit, nuts or bran
- Breakfast cereal without added fruit, nuts bran or fibre
- Boiled sweets, chocolate (without fruit or nuts). Seedless jam and honey are allowed

Foods to be avoided

- Fruit and vegetables except for melon, carrots, cauliflower and boiled/mashed potatoes
- Biscuits, crackers and cake with fruit, nuts or bran, digestive biscuits

You should drink plenty of clear fluids throughout the day.

On the day of your appointment do not eat or drink anything for the six hours before your appointment time.

Please continue to take any medicine or tablets that you are taking with a small amount of water.

Clothes and accessories:

There are some clothes that can affect the quality of the x-ray and you may be asked to remove them and wear a hospital gown.

You may also be asked to remove jewellery, dentures, glasses and any metal objects or clothing that might interfere with the x-ray images.

Help and support in the department

If you have any medical problem which you feel may affect your safety in the department, or if you feel you may need any assistance, please let us know when you arrive.

Do I need to give my permission (consent)?

The radiographer will ask you if you are happy for the examination to go ahead. This is called verbal consent and might only involve the radiographer checking you are booked for the correct examination.

If you do not wish to have the examination or are undecided, please ask the radiographer / radiologist so that they can answer any questions you may have.

Remember, it is your decision. You can change your mind at any time and your wishes will be respected.

However, not having the examination may delay your diagnosis as the referring clinician may not have all the needed information.

How long will it take?

The examination can take **1-3** hours (most of the morning) to complete and in some cases over 4 hours. We recommend that you bring something to read with you.

When it is completed you will be allowed to leave the examination room.

The radiographer will usually not be able to give you any results at that time.

What happens after a Barium Follow Through examination?

Please drink plenty of water after the test as the barium can be constipating unless you have been told to limit your water intake by your medical team.

The barium may take several days to pass through your system. Eating high fibre foods such as fruit, vegetables, wholemeal bread et cetera. for the next few days may help the barium pass through more quickly.

You may notice that your stools (faeces) are white or paler during the next few days. This is perfectly normal.

When will I get my results?

The images will be studied by a radiologist or gastro-intestinal radiographer and the results will be sent to the person who referred you for the examination.

The radiographer will tell you how to get your results and how long it will take, as this may be slightly different for each patient.

You may already have an appointment with the clinician who referred you. If not, please contact them to arrange a time to talk about the results and any treatment you may need.

If you are staying in hospital, the results will be given to the doctors looking after you on the ward.

What should I do if I have a problem?

You should not have any problems that is a result of the Barium Follow Through examination.

If you feel your condition has changed, or you need further medical advice before receiving your results/after leaving the hospital, please make an appointment with the doctor that referred you, or in an emergency, go to your nearest Emergency Department (ED).

How can I provide feedback for the appointment I have attended today?

The Division of Imaging welcomes feedback from all our patients. We actively take part in the Friends and Family Test and we complete a patient experience questionnaire every month to obtain feedback on the experiences you have had. Please speak to a member of staff regarding the feedback or there are posters within the department with QR codes so you can complete these online.

Contact us

For contact information please refer to your appointment letter or if you are an inpatient please direct your queries to one of the medical staff on the ward.

Language and accessible support services:

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch.

Your comments and concerns

If you would like to provide feedback you can:

- Ask to speak to the department lead / manager.
- Write to us: Patient Advice and Liaison Services, 1st Floor, Cobbett House, Manchester Royal Infirmary, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9WL.
- Log onto the Patient Opinion website www.patientopinion.org.uk/ click on 'Tell your Story'

If you would like to discuss a concern or make a complaint:

Ask to speak to the department manager – they may be able to help straight away. Inpatients can speak to a senior nurse or manager by contacting the Tell Us Today service on (0161) 701 1999.

Contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (0161) 276 8686 email: pals@mft.nhs.uk. Ask for our information leaflet.

We welcome your feedback so we can continue to improve our services.

NHS 111

This service offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

Telephone: 111, 24 hours a day
Website: www.111.nhs.uk

Finally

Some of your questions should have been answered by this leaflet, but remember that this is only a starting point for discussion about your treatment with the doctors looking after you. Further information can be obtained by contacting the radiology department that is performing the procedure. Do satisfy yourself that you have received enough information about the procedure, before you sign the consent form.