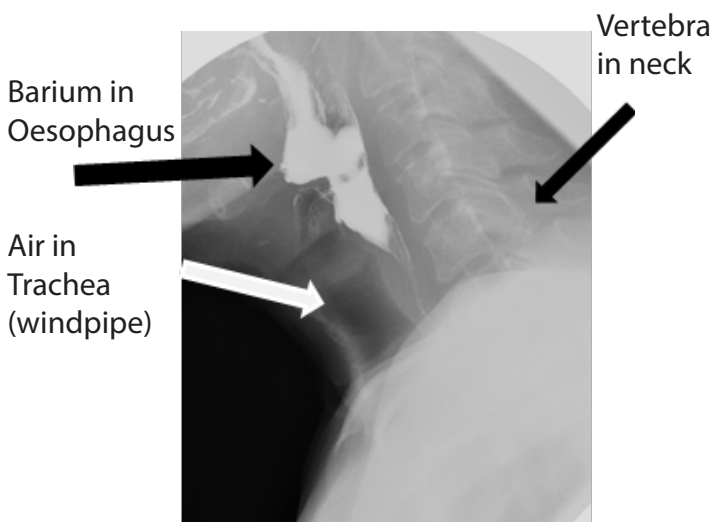


What is a barium or contrast swallow?

It is an x-ray examination to show parts of the throat and oesophagus (tube leading to the stomach).



What does it involve?

When you arrive in the department, we will ask you to change into a gown. It is important to remove any necklaces, earrings or other metal objects, which may show up on the x-rays.

Once in the x-ray room you will be asked to stand in front of the x-ray machine and drink a few mouthfuls of barium (a chalky white mixture) or contrast (a metallic tasting liquid). Most patients are given barium. The contrast type drink is generally given if you have had previous surgery to oesophagus or if you have an unsafe swallow which means that you frequently choke on liquid and have experienced pneumonia as a result.

The radiologist will tell you to swallow the liquid and x-ray images are taken at the same time. The examination is usually made standing up but some x-ray images may be taken with you lying down. The room will be slightly darkened during the examination so that the screen can be seen clearly.

If you have difficulty standing for a prolonged period, let us know and we will do the examination with you sitting down.

Do I have to do anything beforehand?

Yes. We ask you to have nothing to eat or drink for six hours before the examination. Occasionally, when only looking at the upper oesophagus, we can do a barium swallow whilst allowing you to eat and drink normally beforehand. We will let you know if this is the case.

Can I still take my usual medication?

Yes, with a small sip of water. However, if you have to take your morning medication with food, please bring this with you, together with a snack, to take after your examination.

How many x-ray images will be taken?

It is difficult to be specific as it can vary depending on what the doctor wants to see. However, the examination normally takes about 10 minutes.

Aftercare

You may eat and drink normally afterwards. It is very important to drink plenty of water after the procedure to aid excretion the barium or contrast. If you have drunk barium, expect to have chalky appearing stools for several days. If you have drunk the liquid contrast, this will be excreted in your urine (and will not change the normal colour).

When will I get the results?

We suggest you contact your referring doctor or consultant to arrange for the results to be discussed with you. They will usually have received these results from us within five working days.

Can I still have this examination if I have a pacemaker or an internal electronic device?

Yes. There is no problem with this.

Diabetic patients

If you are diabetic and are treated with anything other than diet control, please contact your G.P for advice before attending the appointment.

Female patients

Any female patients aged between 12-55 years old who are undergoing this examination will be asked if they might be pregnant as we will be exposing the upper abdomen to radiation, we will ask you to sign a form confirming your pregnancy status. If you are pregnant or think you may be pregnant please inform the department or radiographer before the examination.

Any further questions

If you have any further questions please feel free to phone the number below or ask the radiographer on the day of your appointment.

Where to find us

The Radiology department is situated inside the clock tower entrance and is also accessible inside from the main corridor as you walk in from the car park. Please use the pay and display visitor car park. Current charges and further information may be found on our website www.qvh.nhs.uk.

Should you have any other concerns or further questions regarding your appointment, please contact the **Radiology department**:
Tel: 01342 414249
Monday to Friday - 9am to 5pm.

Further hospital information

We hope you find your visit to the hospital a pleasant experience. We would like to hear your comments, as we are constantly trying to improve our service to you.

If you would like this leaflet in larger print or an alternative format, please contact the Radiology department.

Barium Swallow Information

Please ask if you
would like this leaflet
in larger print or a
different format.

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