

Barium Follow Through

Introduction

The Barium Follow Through examination is a method of investigating the small bowel.

Patient preparation

On arranging an appointment for this examination you will be given an instruction sheet (telling you how to prepare for the test). This will involve fasting from midnight. The duration of this investigation may vary but typically you can expect to be in the department for 3 to 4 hours. Female patients please let us know in advance if you are or think you may be pregnant. You may wish to bring a newspaper or book with you to read whilst you are in the department.

During the examination

You will be given 1 large cup of barium liquid to drink. The first x-ray picture will be taken approximately 20 minutes after you have finished drinking. For this you will be brought into the x-ray room and asked to lie on the x-ray table. Further x-ray pictures will be taken at 30 minute intervals until the entire small bowel is seen. The length of time this will take varies from patient to patient; hence the total examination time may be 3 to 4 hours.

After the examination

You may eat and drink normally. Please confirm this with the radiographer before leaving the department. Patients are advised to drink plenty of liquids to stop the bowel getting constipated.

Results

Arrangements will be made for the results of the examination to be sent to your referring doctor.

Medical radiation: risks v benefits

Medical x-rays give a small dose on top of natural radiation. The amount of radiation received during a diagnostic X-ray procedure is low, resulting in the equivalent of approximately a year's background radiation.

As long as it is clearly necessary to help make the correct diagnosis and treatment decision, the benefits of diagnosis and treatment resulting from the examination should outweigh any small radiation risks

Female patients of reproductive capacity

These examinations should be scheduled in the first 10 days of the menstrual cycle. Timing refers to regular 28 day cycle & should be scaled according to cycle length.

For urgent examinations that are justified irrespective of pregnancy status a clinical waiver should be completed by the referring clinician.