

Barium meal and follow through

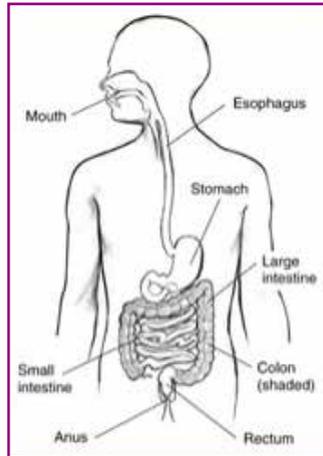


Radiology Department

The leaflet tells you about having a barium meal and follow through. It explains what is involved and what the possible risks are. It is not meant to replace informed discussion between you and your clinician, but can act as a starting point for such discussions. If you have any questions about the procedure please ask the consultant who has referred you for the test or the department which is going to perform it.

What is a barium meal and follow through examination?

You have been referred by your doctor for a follow through examination, this is an x-ray examination used to visualise the stomach and small bowel using barium x-ray dye. We watch the barium as it passes through the small intestine and look for any areas of narrowing or evidence of inflammation.



What Preparation is required?

- We need your small bowel empty, so **please do not eat or drink for at least 6 hours before the examination.**
- If you are on any medication please take as normal with sips of water.
- If you are diabetic please take your normal medication and make sure you eat just enough to prevent low blood sugars, and if necessary bring food with you.

Who does what?

Appointment clerks will help you make; or change appointments.

Radiographers will perform the test. They will be able to answer some of your questions but will not be able to give you the results of your test. They ensure the images taken are of diagnostic quality for a Radiologist to provide a written report for your doctor.

Radiologists are specialist doctors trained to interpret x-rays and images and will report your examination to your consultant.

Can I bring a relative or a friend?

This examination can take up to 2-3 hours so you may bring a relative or friend with you for company, however, they will not be able to accompany you whilst the x-rays are taken. We cannot be more specific on the length of time as every individual digestive tract works at a different rate.

When you arrive

Please register at the reception desk, whereupon you will be directed to the waiting area.

If you attend your appointment wearing light clothing without any metal adornments, such as, jogging bottoms or leggings you may not need to change. If you need to change, a changing cubicle and gown are provided. You will be asked to place your clothes and personal items in a basket, which you will keep with you.

What will happen during the examination?

Your verbal consent will be gained prior to commencing the examination.

A radiographer will prepare a dilute barium drink in a jug for you, (about 650ml/1 pint) which is used to outline the gastro-intestinal tract. Please feel free to bring a flavouring of a powdered milkshake (E.g. Nesquik TM) if you would like to give the drink some taste, however, please give this to the radiographer on arrival before the drink is made up.

We would like you to drink this liquid in a relatively short period of time; most patients usually manage this in 5 to 10 minutes. Upon finishing the drink the radiographer will take a plain x-ray of the abdomen with you lying on your back. We will then take x-rays every 20 or 30 minutes tracking the barium through your small intestine until the barium reaches your large intestine. After the initial x-ray all the subsequent x-rays are taken with you lying on your stomach, please make the radiographer aware if this will be a problem for you. Once the barium has reached your large intestine you will be taken into the fluoroscopy room where a doctor will look at the flow of barium between your small and large bowel. If this is not visualised straight away light compression to your stomach may be required. The examination is then completed.

Are there any risks or side effects to the examination?

The examination is very safe, the barium is not absorbed into the body and, therefore, it is rare to cause any adverse reactions.

As with all x-ray examinations, we endeavour to keep the exposure to radiation to the absolute minimum. A follow through examination usually equates to the similar amount of background radiation you naturally receive over a 12 to 18 month period. Your referring clinician has decided the risks from missing a serious disorder by not having this investigation are considerably greater.

Will the examination be painful?

The examination should not be painful at all; however, the quantity of the drink can make some patients feel nauseous. If we need to press on your abdomen it may be slightly uncomfortable.

Aftercare advice

You may return home or to work following the examination and eat normally. You need to be aware that the Barium can temporarily alter your bowel habit; it will be dependent on how quickly the Barium passes through your intestine. If you have a speedy transit it may result in loose movements shortly after the examination due to the quantity of fluid passing through but with the majority of patients the Barium has the opposite effect. As it passes through it can become thicker due to the gut

absorbing the water content. It is advised to drink more fluids than normal to reduce the risk of constipation, if you have a tendency to constipation it may help to take your normal laxative preparation. The Barium will also be apparent in your stools; they will appear whitish for a day or so. Please note barium is quite heavy and therefore, if there is a reasonable amount in your stools the toilet may need a few flushes, it is important to clear the pan otherwise if it sets, you will be looking at it for years!

When will I get the results?

The films will be reported after your visit and the results sent to your referring doctor, which is normally within 14 days. If you already have a clinic appointment you will receive the results then, otherwise you will receive a letter either with the results or with a clinic appointment.

Women of child bearing age

This examination is not advisable for pregnant women, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Please advise the x-ray department in advance if you think you are or might be pregnant.

Is there an alternative examination?

There is an examination called a Small Bowel Enteroclysis. Should you feel that you would struggle drinking the fluid, this examination involves putting a small tube through your nose, down through your stomach to the first part of your intestine, The Barium is then introduced via this tube and the examination is then as above. Should you prefer to opt for this method of examination, please contact the appointment clerks to change your examination.

Please note that our x-ray table has a patient weight limit of 23 stones or 146kg. If you know that you weigh more than this it is important that you telephone the department on **01483 464150**.

Privacy and dignity

Sometimes tests, although necessary, can be embarrassing or undignified for patients but we promise to do everything we can to make you as comfortable as possible during your visit to the department. We hope that the information in this leaflet will answer any questions you may have but please feel free to contact us if you have any particular worries, questions or concerns.

Patient surveys

We value your opinion on our service and in order to deliver, maintain and improve this service we ask you to complete a short patient questionnaire survey found with your appointment letter.

Completion of these surveys is entirely voluntary.

Questions and contacts

Following the examination, if you experience any problems please contact the department between 08:30 and 17:00. Outside these times please contact your GP.

If you have any questions or would like to know more about this procedure, please telephone the Radiology Department.

Telephone: 01483 464150

If you are unable to keep your appointment notify the Radiology Department as soon as possible.

For further information about Diagnostic Imaging Services at Royal Surrey County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, please contact:

Royal Surrey County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Egerton Road, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 7XX

www.royalsurrey.nhs.uk

Further information

Patient Health Info.

<http://patient.info/health/barium-swallowmealfollow-through>

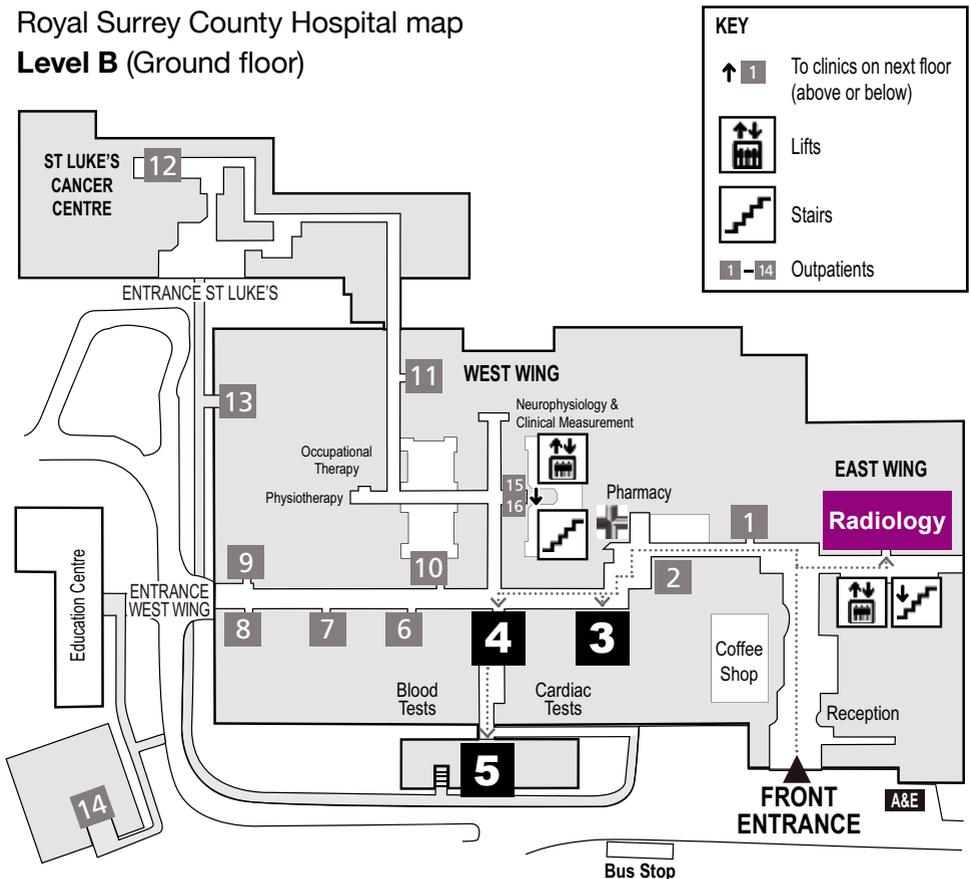
Information on radiation

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ionising-radiation-dose-comparisons/ionising-radiation-dose-comparisons>

How to find the Radiology Department

Royal Surrey County Hospital map

Level B (Ground floor)



Contact details

If you have any questions or would like to know more about this procedure, please telephone the Radiology Department:

Telephone: 01483 464150

PALS and Advocacy contact details

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

Telephone: 01483 402757

Email: rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net

Opening hours: 9.00am–3.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

Past review date: November 2016

Future review date: November 2019

Author: E.Main & R.Futers

Review author: Janine Mace

PIN161117–1148

