

## Barium meal



**Radiology Department**

## **The Barium meal examination**

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You have been referred by your doctor for a Barium meal examination to have a look at the food pipe (oesophagus), stomach and the first part of your small bowel. The barium meal is done by a radiologist (a specialised x-ray doctor) and a radiographer.

## **What preparation is required?**

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It is important for this examination that your stomach is empty, so please don't eat or drink for 6 hours before your appointment.

It would be helpful if you removed and left any earrings or necklaces at home where they will be safe. Watches are fine and will not have to be removed.

Please advise us in advance if you have any mobility problems, so that we may book you a longer appointment time.

If you are a diabetic please inform us and we can re-arrange your appointment to cause as little disruption to your normal meals and medication as possible.

## **Can I bring a relative or a friend?**

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Yes, however, for reasons of safety; they will not be able to accompany you in the x-ray room, except in very special circumstances. You should allow 30 minutes for the examination, although the actual test only takes 5 to 10 minutes, we cannot guarantee there has not been an emergency patient that can delay the appointments.

## **When you arrive**

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Please register at the reception desk, where you will be directed to the waiting area. You will be asked to remove your clothes from above the waist. A changing cubicle and gown will be 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.

The radiographer will give you some barium to drink, it is of a milkshake consistency and has a sweet cream soda flavour. This shows up your oesophagus and stomach. You may also be given some fizzy granules to help the radiologist visualise your stomach. You will be standing up for the first part of the procedure, and then we will lie you down and ask you to get into different positions so we can image the stomach from different angles.

## 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. It may, however, cause some problems with constipation so please follow the after care instructions.

There is a slight risk that the Barium may go down the wrong way and go into your airway, this can usually be cleared by coughing or if necessary by some physiotherapy. Please make us aware if you have previously noticed food/liquid going down the wrong way or if you get recurrent chest infections.

As with all x-ray examinations, we endeavour to keep the exposure to radiation to the absolute minimum. **A barium meal examination usually equates to the similar amount of background radiation you naturally receive over a 3 to 5 week period.** Your referring clinician has decided the risks from missing a serious disorder by not having this investigation are considerably greater.

## Aftercare advice

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You may return home or to work following the examination and eat normally. You need to be aware that barium can temporarily alter your bowel habit, and may make you constipated. 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?

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The x-rays 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. If you were referred by your GP please make an appointment after the two week period.

## Women of child bearing age

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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?

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Although endoscopy (camera test) can see your whole oesophagus and stomach, there is no other test to show the function of the oesophagus and stomach.

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**.

## Questions and contacts

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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](http://www.royalsurrey.nhs.uk)**

## Further information and key reference sources

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### **Royal College of Radiologists**

[https://www.rcr.ac.uk/sites/default/files/docs/patients/worddocs/CRPLG\\_meal.doc](https://www.rcr.ac.uk/sites/default/files/docs/patients/worddocs/CRPLG_meal.doc)

### **NHS Choices**

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Gastroesophageal-reflux-disease/Pages/Diagnosis.aspx>





### **Information on radiation**

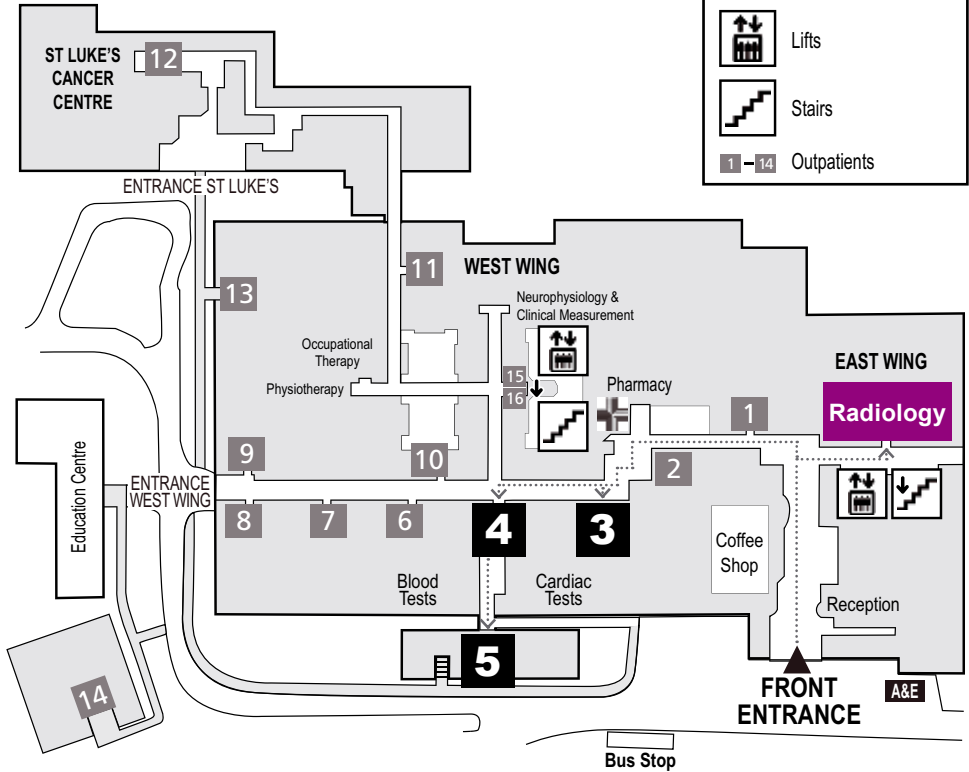
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ionising-radiation-dose-comparisons/ionising-radiation-dose-comparisons>

# How to find the Radiology Department

Royal Surrey County Hospital map  
**Level B (Ground floor)**

**KEY**

-  1 To clinics on next floor (above or below)
-  Lifts
-  Stairs
-  1-14 Outpatients



## Contact details

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

**Telephone:** 01483 464150

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## PALS and Advocacy contact details

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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](mailto: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.

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