

BARIUM MEAL

What is it?

A study of the oesophagus, stomach and duodenal loop using barium. A double contrast technique is usually employed in which the patient is given both barium and gas. The gas is radiolucent and distends the stomach so that the thin layer of barium coating the mucosa can be seen face on, giving very clear images of the fine mucosal detail.

Preparation

1. Nil by mouth for 6 hours prior to X-ray.
2. Patient should be changed into a gown before leaving the ward.

Procedure

The patient is first given a tablespoon of effervescent agents with a little water to make some gas in the stomach. After this a smooth muscle relaxant is injected intravenously (usually 20mg buscopan or 0.25mg (Glucagon) to stop peristalsis (bowel movement). The patient is screened when drinking the 150mls of strawberry flavoured barium, and the turned from side to side and films taken in different positions to show the oesophagus, stomach and duodenal loop.

N.B. Glucagon is used if the patient has glaucoma or heart disease.

How long does it take?

About 15 minutes.

Aftercare

1. The patient should be encouraged to drink plenty of fluids and to eat plenty of fruits to encourage the passage of barium. Some patients find the barium very constipating. A mild laxative may be given if this causes problems.
2. The patient should be warned to expect to pass white faeces.
3. After I.V. Buscopan there may be some blurring of near vision for up to 15 minutes. Patients should not drive for 30 minutes.

**For further information please contact
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