



Patient Information for Water Soluble Swallow

Please read all of this information carefully.

What is a Water Soluble Contrast Swallow?

It is an examination to look at your oesophagus (the tube which carries food from your mouth to your stomach) and sometimes the upper part of your stomach. It may help identify problems with swallowing, narrowing's, post operative leaks or structural abnormalities.

Instead of barium, this test uses a water-soluble contrast agent to coat your oesophagus, which is often chose when there is a concern for aspiration, a possible perforation or post operative leak.

Why have I been sent for a Water Soluble Swallow?

A water soluble contrast swallow is usually recommended if you have symptoms such as difficulty or pain when swallowing, have had surgery to your oesophagus or stomach, recurring chest infections or history of trauma to your head or neck.

What preparation will I need?

Please starve for 6 hours prior to appointment, only sips of water for those that are taking medication. It is essential that you do not have anything to eat or drink after 10pm on the evening before your examination. Do not have even a cup of tea, coffee or water. However, if your appointment is in the afternoon you may have one drink at 7am that morning.

Can I still take my medication?

Yes you can. With a small sip of water.

What if I am Diabetic?

If you are Diabetic, please telephone us to let us know so that we can arrange a morning appointment for you. See telephone numbers at the end of this leaflet.

What if I could be pregnant?

Please inform the department if there is a possibility that you may be pregnant. If you are between the ages of 12 and 55 years, we will ask you to complete a pregnancy status form.

What does a Water Soluble Swallow involve?

You will be asked to change into a hospital gown, leaving on only clothing below the waist, including jewellery (please leave at home). You may bring your own dressing gown from home if you prefer. Please inform the staff if you have any allergies. You will be asked to stand on the x-ray table and drink a clear liquid, which has an orange flavour and coats the lining of your oesophagus and stomach, whilst the practitioner takes x-ray videos. You will then be lay down on the x-ray table and asked to move into several positions which we can help you to do this if needed.

Who will be in the room?

There will be a Radiologist or Advanced Practitioner in the room who will perform the examination. They will usually be assisted by a Radiographer and a Radiology Assistant, who will help to make sure you are comfortable. There may also be a student in the room observing the procedure. However, if you are not happy to have a student present, you do not have to agree.

How long will the examination take?

The examination will take approximately 15 minutes, however, please allow up to an hour for your visit and plenty of time for parking. Although we try our best to keep to your appointment time, there may be a delay due to emergency patients. We are unable to provide any childcare so please make alternative arrangements.

Post examination instructions

Eat and drink as normal or as advised by your referrer.

When will I get my results?

If you have been referred from a hospital consultant, the results will go back to them in approximately 2 weeks time and you will be contacted by them via letter or phone call with a clinic appointment.

Risk and Side Effects

Exposure to a small amount of radiation is involved, however, the benefits of having the examination done usually outweigh the risks.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or need to rearrange your appointment please do not hesitate to contact us on the following numbers:

Birmingham Heartlands Hospital 0121 424 3289

Good Hope Hospital 0121 424 9879

Queen Elizabeth Hospital 0121 371 4695

Accessibility

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