

About Your Esophagram / Barium Swallow

What You Need to Know and Do

An esophagram/barium swallow is an X-ray of your esophagus and stomach. This test helps your doctor find problems like ulcers, tumors, and certain diseases.

What should I do before my esophagram/barium swallow?

- Stop eating and drinking 8 hours before your test.
- Be sure to mention the medicines you take and ask if it's alright to take them before your test.
- Do not smoke the morning of your test.
- Allow extra time to check in. The test usually takes about 30 minutes.

You should let your technologist know if you:

- take any medicines
- have any allergies
- are pregnant or think you might be
- ate or drank within the last 8 hours
- have had any previous surgery.

What happens during my test?

- You will drink barium (a liquid that improves X-ray images).
- You may swallow "fizzies", a substance that makes air build up in your stomach. Don't burp, even if you feel you need to.
- You may need to stand or lie in different positions.
- You will be asked to hold your breath for a short time during the X-ray.

What happens after my exam?

- Your stool may appear white or lighter than normal.
- You may have constipation caused by the barium. You can relieve this by taking an over-the-counter laxative and drinking lots of fluids for several days after the test.
- Talk with your doctor if you have serious bowel movement problems after the test.
- Your doctor will discuss the test results with you during a follow-up appointment or over the phone.