

What you need to know about the Modified Barium Swallow or Esophagram...

What is a Barium Swallow?

The Barium Swallow (or Esophagram) consists of drinking a white fluid that is designed to make your esophagus visible on X-ray film. Sometimes the exam is scheduled along with an Upper G.I. Series. The procedure is most often used to diagnose problems with your digestive tract.

How does it work?

With the use of X-rays, the white barium fluid allows the radiologist to see how your esophagus is working. In order to better evaluate your case, the radiologist may ask you to move from one position to another on the X-ray table, to best obtain a series of images.

May I take someone with me?

Certainly. Your friend or family member is welcome to stay in the waiting room.

How should I prepare for my exam?

The day before:

It is important that you do not eat or drink any dairy products the day before your exam. You should continue to take any prescription medications on schedule — unless your physician has instructed you differently. Do not eat or drink after midnight on the day prior to your exam. On the day of your exam, do not eat or drink.

What about my clothing?

You may be asked to undress, put on a hospital gown, pajama bottoms, and remove any jewelry or other items that may interfere with the imaging.

What will happen during the exam?

You will initially stand on a platform and be asked to drink the barium fluid. The radiologist will then examine your esophagus by watching the barium mixture using a fluoroscope and television monitor. For part of the exam, you may be lying down. After the radiologist has completed his filming, a technologist will then take a series of X-rays in order to provide a better overview of the esophagus.

Following the exam

To help you expel the remaining barium fluid, your physician may direct you to drink eight glasses of water within the 24 hours following your exam. A mild laxative may also be recommended.

When will I learn the results?

The radiologist will evaluate your case and report to your physician. Normally, your physician will inform you of the results of this test and any other necessary testing or treatment within 3 working days.

Whom should I call if I have any other questions?

If you have any questions, please feel free to call Northfield Hospital's Medical Imaging Department at (507) 646-1143.