

The Esophagram

What is an esophagram?

Your doctor has suggested you have an esophagram as part of your evaluation at National Jewish Health. The test evaluates the esophagus. The esophagus is the anatomical structure that goes from the throat to the stomach. This will help your doctor identify possible problems and the best treatment.

How do you get ready for the test?

- **Adults – No solid foods 4 hours prior to procedure.** Adult patients may be on a clear liquid diet 2 hours prior to the procedure. Take medications at the regular times with a small sip of water.
- **Children – No solid foods 6 hours prior to procedure.** A clear liquid diet anytime prior to the procedure is fine. Give medications if necessary at the regular times with small sip of water.
- **Infants - Do not eat or drink 4 hours prior to procedure.** Your child should be thirsty and ready to drink upon arrival for the barium swallow study. Bring a special cup or sippy cup your child likes to use. If your child drinks best from a bottle, bring a bottle. Give medications at the regular times with a small amount of water.
- Wear clothing that you can remove from the waist up. You will be given a gown to wear.
- The esophagram uses x-rays and anyone who is pregnant cannot be in the room during the x-ray.

What happens during an Esophagram Study?

Before the study you/your child will need to remove all clothing and jewelry from the waist up. You will be given a hospital gown to wear. The study is completed in a radiology (x-ray/fluoroscopy) room. If a child is having the esophagram, a family member or caregiver will be encouraged to stay in the x-ray room to make it easier for the child. The radiologist or radiology practitioner assistant (RPA) operates the fluoroscopy equipment and takes images of the esophagus. A report will be sent to your physician within 24 hours.

You/your child will be asked to drink 1 to 2 cups of barium. The barium is a contrast material that makes liquids show up on the image screen as gray or black. You/your child will drink the barium while standing up and while lying down.

If you have any questions or don't understand the instructions please ask.

What does barium taste like?

Barium comes in several different consistencies and is artificially sweetened and flavored.

What should you do after the test?

Barium rarely causes any problems. It passes through the digestive system. Drink extra fluids for 12 to 24 hours after the study. If your/your child becomes constipated after the study, drink more liquids. If the constipation continues, talk with your doctor.

How long will the test take?

The esophagram will take about 30 minutes. Some of the time is taken preparing for the study.

How do you get to your appointment?

If you are being seen at National Jewish Health, your appointment is in the Institute for Advanced Biomedical Imaging (Radiology). You will be directed where to go when you check-in. If you have any questions you can contact Advanced Biomedical Imaging (Radiology) at 303-398-1611.

Visit our website for more information about support groups, clinical trials and lifestyle information.

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NOTE: This information is provided to you as an educational service of National Jewish Health. It is not meant to be a substitute for consulting with your own physician.

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