

Indigestion, Acid Reflux, Heartburn Tests - Barium X-Rays

Barium X-rays Barium X-rays are used nowadays far less than in the past because in most cases an endoscopy examination will give all the information that the doctor needs. However, some GPs may not have access to a hospital department offering an endoscopy service and so may refer their patients for a barium X-ray instead. In any case, this may be a better option for some individuals, especially if the problem is in the oesophagus, as the test shows up the structure of the oesophagus and any muscle spasm will be visible. Ordinary X-ray examinations of the kind used to assess broken bones give poor images of the internal organs. If, however, some barium sulphate is swallowed before the X-rays are taken it outlines the shape of the oesophagus and stomach. Barium is a heavy metal that is totally impenetrable by X-rays and so shows up on films and as opaque shadows. Rest assured that barium sulphate is tasteless and causes no discomfort when you swallow it. X-ray examinations are generally carried out in the outpatient department, and you do not need an anaesthetic. The radiologist uses a fluorescent screen watch the progress of the barium after you have swallowed it, and he or she will take pictures from time a permanent record. The whole examination usually takes about 20 to 30 minutes. The barium is eventually passed out in the faeces; it sometimes causes constipation, so you should eat a high fibre diet for a day or two after the test has been done.

About the Author

News items, patient care, alumni information, academics, student resources and computer.

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