



Barium

Please read this in conjunction with any patient information leaflet provided by the manufacturer. However, please note that this information sheet explains about the use of barium in children and young people so may differ from the manufacturer's information.

This information sheet explains what barium is, how it is given and some of the possible side effects. Each person reacts differently to medicines, so your child will not necessarily suffer from every side effect mentioned. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

What is barium?

Barium sulphate is a thick, white liquid that shows up well on x-rays. It is used in various diagnostic tests, such as Upper GI contrast studies and Contrast enemas. It is also used to highlight parts of the digestive system for certain interventional radiology procedures.

How is it given?

Depending on the procedure planned, we will either ask you to give the barium at home the night before the procedure or we will give it to your child in the Radiology department during their test.

Barium comes in a can, similar to a cola can, and tastes a little chalky. If your child does not like the taste, you can flavour it with a little milkshake powder or syrup.

If your child has a nasogastric or gastrostomy tube, the barium can sometimes be given through the device. You must flush the device thoroughly afterwards as you have been shown. Otherwise the barium may block the tube.

For interventional radiology procedures, it is important that your child has enough barium before the procedure. If your child has not had enough barium for the procedure to be carried out safely, the doctors will discuss possible alternatives but the procedure may have to be delayed or even cancelled. Please tell us if your child has not been able to take all the barium.

Your child weighs _____ kg
so should drink _____ mls
of barium (dose = 3ml/kg)

Once your child has had the dose of barium, you can dispose of the rest of the can in your household rubbish.

What are the side effects?

Barium does not have any major side effects. It may in large volumes cause some constipation in the days that follow the procedure. Your child's faeces (poo) may appear white as the barium is passing out of his or her body but this is quite normal.

Very rarely, people may have an allergic reaction to barium. If this occurs, take your child to your nearest Accident and Emergency (A&E) department, taking the barium can with you.

Interactions with other medicines

Barium will not interfere with any medicines your child is taking. Unless advised otherwise, you should continue to give your child medicines at the scheduled time and dose.

Useful numbers

GOSH switchboard 020 7405 9200

Pharmacy medicines information 020 7829 8608 (Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm)

Interventional Radiology – 020 7829 7943