

Your child's water-soluble swallow/meal examination

The aim of this leaflet is to help answer some of the questions you may have about your child having a water-soluble swallow/meal examination. It explains the benefits, risks and alternatives of the procedure as well as what you can expect when you come to the Evelina London Children's Hospital (ELCH). If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to a doctor, radiographer or nurse caring for your child.

What is a water-soluble swallow/meal examination?

A water-soluble swallow/meal examination is a study of your child's upper gastrointestinal tract including their oesophagus (food pipe) and stomach. This is done using a liquid called 'contrast' (a liquid that is easily seen on X-rays) while X-ray images are taken.

The procedure is done by both a radiologist (a doctor who uses X-rays to diagnose and treat illnesses) and a radiographer (a health professional that produces the images used to diagnose and treat illnesses).

The procedure is called 'fluoroscopic imaging' or 'fluoroscopy' and uses X-rays to view images in real time. This allows the radiologist to view your child's insides and see how they are functioning.

Why should my child have a water-soluble swallow/meal?

Fluoroscopy makes it possible to see internal organs in motion, so it can provide information that that will help the doctor to make a correct diagnosis or decision about your child's treatment.

What are the risks?

All X-ray examinations involve exposure to radiation in varying amounts. The length of time and level of exposure to radiation from X-rays in medical examinations is strictly controlled and kept to the minimum level that is possible. The doses that are used in medical X-rays are very low and are thought to be very safe. They are similar in strength to other sources of natural radiation that people are exposed to every day, like radiation from the sun and other stars.

The examination takes place in our children's fluoroscopy room that is specifically designed for children and young people, and offers very low dose radiation imaging.

Are there any alternatives?

This depends on what your child is being examined for. The team looking after your child will assess which method of examination is most appropriate. Each request is also carefully assessed by the imaging team to ensure the most appropriate examination is carried out. If you have any questions please speak to the team who referred your child.

What should we do to prepare?

To ensure good quality images, it is important that your child's stomach is empty for this examination. Therefore we ask that your child is not fed before the appointment for the times stated below.

Children aged one or over: Do not eat or drink anything for **two hours** before the appointment.

Children under one year: Do not feed for **one hour** before the appointment.

If your child has a favourite bottle or beaker cup you may like to bring it with you.

Metal objects can affect the image, so please avoid dressing your child in clothing with poppers or zips. No other special preparation is required.

Older children may be asked to wear a hospital gown during the exam and to remove jewellery, glasses and any clothing that contains metal.

We have a selection of DVDs to help distract your child during the examination. Or you can bring a favourite toy with you, or they may prefer to watch something on your phone or tablet. There is poor signal in the room and so it's best to download content beforehand.

Consent - asking for your consent

We want to involve you in all the decisions about your child's care and treatment. You will be asked if you consent to the procedure when you are called into the fluoroscopy room. If you do consent, this verbally confirms that you agree to your child having the examination and that you understand what it involves.

If you would like more information about our consent process, please speak to a member of staff caring for your child.

If you still have questions or concerns on the day of the water-soluble swallow/meal, please ask the radiographers or the radiologist that is going to do the examination.

Who can I expect in the room?

During the examination there will be a radiologist and a radiographer in the room. Sometimes a nurse can also be present, as well as a play specialist, which may be helpful for your child and the examination being performed.

What happens before the examination?

As the imaging involves the use of X-rays, we legally have to ask anyone with child bearing potential over the age of 12 whether there is any chance they could be pregnant. To do this we will provide a simple question sheet when you book in at the imaging reception. This will be checked by the radiographer undertaking the examination.

Before going into the fluoroscopy room, your child may be required to get changed. The radiographer will let you know if this is necessary, direct you to a changing room and provide guidance on what to wear.

What happens during the examination?

The examination takes place in our children's fluoroscopy room that is located in the Children's Imaging Department. As a parent or carer you may be asked by the radiographer to support or hold your child in a particular position (this depends on their age). If this assistance is required, you will be asked to wear a lead coat to protect you from the radiation. If there is any chance that you could be pregnant, please notify the radiographer before the examination begins. If you are pregnant, we advise you to bring another family member with you to act as a supporter.

The radiographer and/or radiologist will explain what will happen during the procedure. Your child will be asked to lie on an X-ray table and encouraged to drink a contrast liquid from a bottle or cup using a straw. We will take X-ray images of your child swallowing the liquid while it passes through their upper gastrointestinal tract. To ensure all areas under investigation are looked at in detail, your child will be asked or assisted to move into various positions to allow the contrast to coat all the areas being examined.

The liquid given has an unusual taste that some children dislike. We will attempt to disguise the taste by mixing the contrast with fruit juice.

Will my child feel any pain?

This examination should not be painful.

What happens after the procedure?

You and your child will be able to leave the department after the examination. Your child can eat and drink normally.

Will we have a follow-up appointment?

Your child may already have an appointment booked with the team who referred them. If not, please contact them to arrange an appointment to discuss the results of this test.

Useful sources of information

Contact us

Contact the Children's Imaging Department if you have any questions, **phone:** 020 7188 9218, or visit our website, **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk or www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets

Evelina London Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline.

phone: 020 7188 3003 10am to 5pm, Monday to Friday **email:** letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk

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