



Pharyngogram

How to prepare for your procedure

A pharyngogram is an examination that is done to check the structure and function of your throat.

Read this handout to learn how the examination works, how it is performed, how to prepare for the it, what to expect during the examination, and how to get your results.

What is a pharyngogram?

A pharyngogram is an examination to study the function and appearance of the throat, also called the *pharynx*, and to check the swallowing process.

How does the examination work?

Liquid *barium sulfate suspension*, a thick metallic substance, is swallowed. This liquid coats the inside of the pharynx so that a clear picture can be taken. The barium is not absorbed by the body.

Small amounts of X-rays are then passed through the body. When a special X-ray film plate is exposed to the absorbed X-rays, a detailed picture of the pharynx is captured.

How should I prepare?

- Tell your doctor about any recent illnesses or other medical conditions, as well as any allergies you might have to medications.
- Tell your doctor or radiology technologist if there is any chance you are pregnant.
- Do not eat or drink anything after midnight of the day before your examination. Also, do not smoke or chew gum.
- Take any routine prescribed oral medicine with small amounts of water.
- You will change into a gown before your examination.
- You will need to remove jewelry, glasses, or any metal objects that could affect the pictures.

Questions?

Call 206-598-6200

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC Radiology staff are also available to help at any time.

Imaging
Services/Radiology:
206-598-6200

How is the examination performed?

The radiologist or technologist will describe how the examination is done and will review rare contraindications (problems that need special attention). This examination takes about 30 minutes.

You will be given a cup of barium sulfate (consistency of a milkshake) to drink while the radiologist watches and checks the swallowing process with *fluoroscopy* (an X-ray unit combined with a TV monitor). As the barium coats the lining of the pharynx and esophagus, images are taken to track the pathway to the stomach. You will be placed in various positions throughout the examination so that the structures can be viewed well.

What will I feel during the examination?

There is no discomfort caused by this examination.

After the examination, you may return to a normal diet and lifestyle, unless you are advised otherwise by your doctor.

Because the barium is white, your stool may be chalky and light-colored for 1 to 3 days. This is normal.

You should drink extra water for 24 hours after the examination.

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

A radiologist trained to interpret the pharyngogram will review the pictures and send a report to your primary care doctor. The radiologist may not discuss the results with you. Your doctor will give you your test results. Based on the findings, you and your doctor will decide the next step, such as treatment for a problem, as needed.

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