

Upper GI Barium X-Ray Exam

What is an upper GI barium X-ray exam?

An upper GI barium X-ray exam is a procedure that uses barium liquid and X-rays to examine your esophagus, stomach, and small intestine. Barium is a liquid that can be seen on X-rays.

This procedure is also called an upper gastrointestinal (GI) barium study or upper GI series. If the test looks just at the esophagus, it is called a barium swallow. (The esophagus is the tube that connects the mouth and stomach.)

When is it used?

This procedure may be done if you have:

- Abdominal pain or heartburn
- Problems swallowing
- Bleeding in your digestive tract
- A suspected tumor in or near your digestive tract

The X-ray exam helps diagnose hiatal hernia, ulcers, tumors, and inflammation or irritation of the esophagus.

Instead of this procedure, other procedures may include an endoscopy. An endoscopy is an exam of the esophagus and stomach with a slim, flexible, lighted tube.

You may choose not to have treatment. Ask your healthcare provider about your choices for treatment and the risks.

How do I prepare for this procedure?

- Tell your provider if you have any allergies to food or medicine.
- Your healthcare provider will tell you when to stop eating and drinking before the procedure. You may also be asked not to chew gum or smoke cigarettes after midnight the night before the procedure. Both can increase the amount of saliva in your stomach, which can interfere with the exam.
- You may or may not need to take your regular medicines the day of the procedure, depending on what they are and when you need to take them. Tell your healthcare provider about all medicines and supplements that you take. Ask your healthcare provider if you need to avoid taking any medicine or supplements before the procedure.
- Follow any instructions your healthcare provider may give you. Ask any questions you have before the procedure. You should understand what the healthcare provider is going to do.

What happens during the procedure?

Your healthcare provider will give you barium in a flavored drink like a milkshake.

The X-ray technologist will ask you first to stand in front of the X-ray machine and then you will lie on an X-ray table that tilts in various positions. A small amount of air may be pumped into your stomach to get better X-ray pictures.

The technologist will take X-rays of the barium liquid going down your throat, into your stomach, and sometimes going on through your small intestine. You will be free to move around between X-rays and will not have to stay on the X-ray table all of the time. The test will end when the barium moves from your small intestine into your large intestine.

The exam usually takes 1 to 2 hours. Sometimes it may last longer.

What happens after the procedure?

You can go home after the test is completed. You may be constipated from the barium. If so, you may need to take a laxative. Your bowel movements may look whitish for the next few days.

The radiologist will send a report to your healthcare provider.

Ask your healthcare provider:

- How and when you will hear your test results
- What activities you should avoid and when you can return to your normal activities
- How to take care of yourself at home
- What symptoms or problems you should watch for and what to do if you have them

Make sure you know when you should come back for a checkup.

What are the risks of this procedure?

Your healthcare provider will explain the procedure and any risks. Some possible risks include:

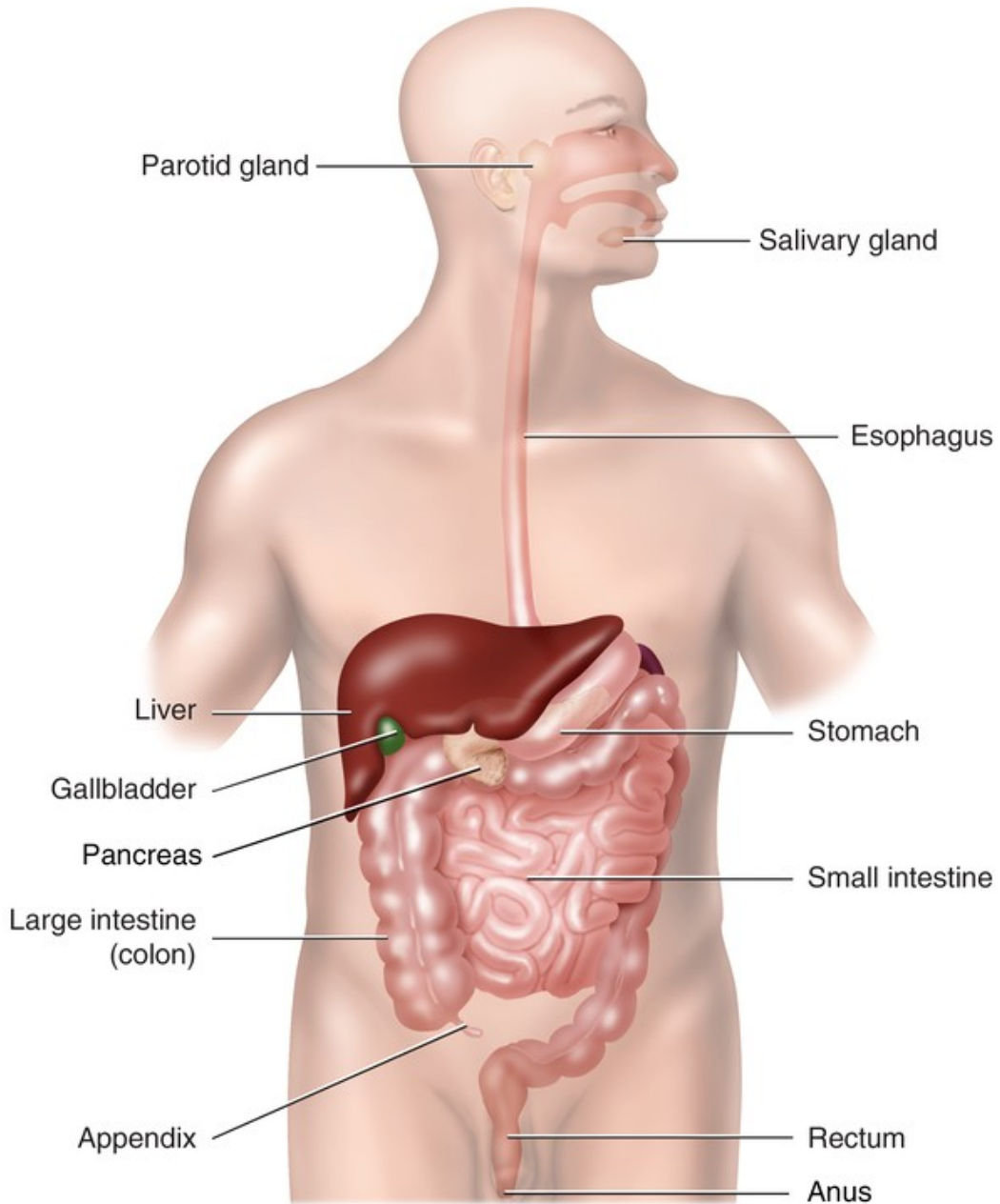
- You could inhale the barium into your lungs, which could cause breathing problems or pneumonia.
- Rarely, you may have an allergic reaction to medicines used during the procedure.

There is risk with every treatment or procedure. Ask your healthcare provider how these risks apply to you.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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Digestive System



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