



Modified Barium Swallowing Study

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What is a Modified Barium Swallowing Study?

A Modified Barium Swallowing Study (MBS) is a moving x-ray of your child's oral (mouth) and pharyngeal (throat) mechanism while eating. This moving x-ray is videotaped so that it can be further analyzed after the study is completed.

Where do I go for a MBS?

A Modified Barium Swallowing Study takes place in the Radiology department of a hospital.

Who will be present for the study?

A team of specialists performs the Modified Barium Swallow Study. A speech-language pathologist specializing in dysphagia (feeding/swallowing disorders) coordinates the events of the study: deciding which types of food your child should eat or drink, how much he/she should eat or drink, and what utensils or method of delivery should be used. The speech-language pathologist also interprets the results of this study. The Radiologist operates the x-ray equipment and aids in interpreting results. A radiology technician is also present to help set up the room and aid with the equipment.

What do I need to bring?

You will be asked to bring the bottle or cup from which your child generally drinks, as well as a variety of foods for your child to eat during the study (if your child is eating solid foods). You will also be asked to dress your child in something that does not have snaps, buckles, or other metal objects near his/her neck so that they don't show up on the x-ray. In the x-ray suite, your child's food or liquid will be mixed with barium sulfate, a contrast material that allows the food to be visible on the x-ray. Barium sulfate is not harmful to your child when ingested in these small quantities. It is not absorbed by your body and will come out looking just as it did going in. Once all of the food is prepared, your child will be seated in an age-appropriate seat next to the x-ray equipment and the study will begin.

Who will feed my child?

Whenever possible, the child's parent or caregiver is asked to feed the child during the study in an attempt to replicate the child's typical feeding situation. Anyone in the x-ray suite will be required to wear a lead apron in order to minimize exposure to radiation. Lead shields will also be provided for your child.

Why is a MBS recommended?

Modified Barium Swallow Studies are recommended for infants or children with suspected swallowing disorders in order to rule out aspiration or airway obstruction. Aspiration occurs when food or liquids enter the airway, falling below the level of the vocal folds. Clinical signs of swallowing dysfunction include: coughing, choking, gagging, or sneezing during feedings; color changes or eye reddening with swallowing; difficulty coordinating swallowing with respiration; congestion during or after feeding; frequent or lengthy colds or congestion; and weight loss or failure to thrive. An MBS also helps your child's therapist to identify strategies and techniques, which can be used to safely feed your child or to help your child prepare to eat safely.