

What is a Modified Barium Swallow Study?

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A Modified Barium Swallow Study, or MBS, is a special x-ray that is taken to check swallowing skills. It is carried out by a Radiologist and a Speech Language Pathologist (SLP). During this test, your mouth, throat, and esophagus, a muscular tube which connects your mouth to your stomach, is checked. The test will help you, your doctor, and the SLP plan what types of foods and liquids are easier for you to swallow. The SLP will also identify positions and ways to help you swallow more easily and safely.

What will happen during an MBS?

You will be taken to an x-ray room and seated comfortably. You will be asked to swallow small amounts of food and liquid mixed with barium. Barium is a liquid or paste that allows images of your mouth, throat and esophagus to be seen on x-ray. The x-ray captures moving images of the food you are swallowing as it travels from your mouth through your throat and into your esophagus. This test helps identify whether food or liquid is entering your lungs (aspiration). The test also shows which part of your mouth or throat lacks strength or coordination to move the food or liquid in the right direction.

If you are pregnant, or think you might be, tell the radiologist or technologist before the x-ray is taken.

Who should have an MBS?

Patients who:

- Have globus (feeling of food “stuck in the throat”)
- Are not able to accept/tolerate Fiberoptic Endoscopic Evaluation of Swallowing (FEES)
- Have suspected oral stage problems (problems keeping food/liquid in the mouth or moving food/liquid around the mouth) that should be imaged
- Have esophageal stage problems (problems with food/liquid moving through the esophagus to the stomach) or suspicion of reflux.

Who should not have an MBS?

Patients who:

- Have changes in anatomy, swelling or irritation
- Have a reduced ability to sense, swallow, or clear secretions
- Show tiredness over a meal that may lead to aspiration (food in the lungs)
- Show laryngeal signs of reflux
- Are difficult to position (confined to wheelchair, obese, or have severe curvature of the spine).

What are the benefits of an MBS?

The benefits of an MBS are:

- ✓ Helps the SLP decide if you can eat safely and what is the safest diet for you.
- ✓ Allows the SLP to see more clearly the different phases of swallowing
- ✓ Enables the SLP to see the extent of aspiration.

Are there adverse reactions?

During this study, the patient is exposed to small amounts of radiation from the x-ray machine. A small number of patients may be allergic to barium that is used to coat the food so it is visible during swallowing.

What is an alternative to the MBS?

Fiberoptic Endoscopic Evaluation of Swallowing (FEES) is an alternative procedure to the MBS. During this test, a thin, flexible tube, called a **Laryngoscope**, is used that has a small camera on the end. This scope is passed through the nose to the back of the throat. The larynx and surrounding structures can be viewed. The scope is placed high in the throat and does not pass between the vocal cords. Colored foods and liquids are given to the patient and the swallow is observed.

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