



Children's  
of Alabama®

# Modified Barium Swallow FAQ

1600 7th Ave S • Birmingham, AL 35233 • 205.638.9100

## What is a Modified Barium Swallow study (MBS)?

- MBS is a test that helps to see if your child has any food or drinks going into their lungs (aspiration). It is an X-ray that allows us to view the way that food and drinks go as your child swallows.

## For driving directions and parking information:

Main campus (Lowder, McWane, Russell) <https://www.childrensal.org/lowder-mcwane>

Children's South: <https://www.childrensal.org/south>

If you are more than 15 minutes late for your appointment, you may be asked to reschedule

## Why does my child need to be NPO for the test?

- NPO means nothing to eat or drink by mouth or by tube.
- The only exception is medication. Please give your child any medications recommended by his or her doctor.
- Your child needs to be NPO for the recommended time to make sure he or she is hungry enough to participate, which will allow us to see a large sample size.
- If the child has had anything to eat or drink during the NPO window, we may not be able to complete a thorough exam or provide the most accurate recommendations.

### How long does my child need to be NPO?

- For patients who are less than 6 months of age, we recommend NPO for 2 hours.
- For children 6 months and older, we recommend NPO for 4 hours

## What should I bring?

- Please bring your child's preferred drinking utensils (bottle, sippy, straw cup, etc.).
- If using a bottle, please bring all nipples used.
- We typically carry Dr. Brown's and MAM bottle brands, but do not stock other bottle brands.
- **Please call a Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) at 205-638-9149 before the study for instructions if your baby has a bottle preference and will not accept these brands.**
- You may bring preferred snacks and/or solid foods he or she has difficulty eating.
- You may also bring any flavoring (powder flavoring or syrups) to add to the barium.
- Your child can eat and drink immediately following the test. Please bring everything you need to feed your child.

## What if my child does not accept a drinking utensil such as a bottle?

- We recommend that the child can consistently accept at least 1 ounce by drinking utensil (bottle, cup, straw, etc.) or by spoon before a swallow study.

## What if I am breastfeeding?

- We recommend introducing the bottle at least 2 weeks before or at least 5 feedings before the swallow study.
- Please call Speech Pathology at 205-638-9149 if your child is having difficulty taking the bottle or if you have any questions.

## What will happen during the MBS?

- During the test, your child will sit in a chair that looks like a car seat.
- He or she will have a "seat belt" on to keep them safe and secure.
- The SLP, the Radiology Technician, and/or the Fluoroscopist will help position your child appropriately before and during the study.
- The child needs to remain as still as possible while keeping his or her head in a forward position so we can take pictures from the side.
- If able, we ask the caregiver to feed the child during the study. The SLP will hand you the consistencies to give your child.
- We may try a wide range of different thick liquids and solids depending on the results we are seeing.
- The SLP completing the study may say some unfamiliar words during the study so that they can be written down. The SLP will go over all the results once the study is completed.

## **Will I be able to be with my child?**

- Two adults are allowed to be present in the room during the MBS.
- Pregnant women, siblings and/or other children cannot be in the imaging room with the child.
- If other children will be coming to the appointment, please bring another adult to supervise the children in the Radiology Department lobby during the exam.
- If it is not possible to bring another adult, the therapist or a radiology technologist can feed the child so the caregiver can wait in the lobby with the other child or children.
- Being separated from a caregiver can impact your child's participation in the study.

## **Why do you use barium?**

- Barium is used because it can be seen on an X-ray while plain food and liquid cannot be seen.

## **Does barium taste bad?**

- The barium technically has an apple flavoring; however, we believe it tastes chalkier at baseline.
- We can add flavoring to the barium trials to improve the taste.
- The pudding consistency we may use has a vanilla flavor.

## **How much radiation exposure will my child receive during the test?**

- Each exam varies so the amount of radiation the patient receives cannot be specified.
- The fluoroscopist will use proper radiation safety practices during the exam to keep your child's exposure as low as reasonably possible.

## **How long will the test take?**

- The entire evaluation can take between 30 minutes to an hour. If you are more than 15 minutes late for your appointment, you may be asked to reschedule.
- The video swallow test typically does not take more than 15 minutes. It may be shorter or longer depending on how many different types of liquids and solids need to be evaluated and how well the child participates.
- During this time, we take a thorough history, perform the video swallow study, review the results, and discuss the results and recommendations with the patient and/or caregiver.

## **When will I know the results?**

- The SLP may review the video during or after the study and then discuss exactly what happened during the test.
- A printed copy of the results, recommendations, and feeding plan will be provided at the end of the study.
- The recommendations will include the safest way for your child to eat and drink to prevent aspiration (food and/or liquid entering the lungs) and to maintain adequate nutrition/hydration.
- Your referring physician will receive a copy of the same results.
- You will need to follow up with your child's referring physician for further care, consultations, and referral to other specialists.

## **What should I expect after the MBS?**

- Your child may have bowel movements that are white or lighter in color for 1-2 days.
- Please call your child's pediatrician if he or she continues to have difficulty for longer than a week.

## **How do I schedule a repeat MBS?**

- A new order will be needed from the referring physician to schedule the repeat swallow study.
- Once the order is placed, scheduling will call the caregiver to schedule the next appointment.

If you have further questions or if you would like to discuss if an MBS is appropriate for your child, please call Speech and Hearing at 205-638-9149. We can also schedule an outpatient feeding evaluation first to determine if an MBS is recommended for your child. Children who are having difficulty learning new feeding skills, transitioning to solid foods, or experiencing reflux symptoms may not need an MBS.