What is a pharyngogram?

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

How does the exam work?

We will ask you to swallow liquid barium sulfate suspension, a thick metallic substance. This liquid coats the inside of your pharynx so that clear pictures can be taken. The barium is not absorbed by your body.

Small amounts of X-rays are then passed through your body. When a special X-ray film plate is exposed to the absorbed X-rays, a detailed picture of your 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 medicines.
- Tell your doctor or radiology technologist if there is any chance you are pregnant.
- Eat your regular diet the evening before your exam.
- Do not eat or drink anything after midnight of the day before your exam. Also, do not smoke or chew gum.
- Take any essential prescribed oral medicine with small sips of water.
- You will change into a gown before your exam.
- You will need to remove jewelry, glasses, or any metal objects that could affect the pictures.
Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. Clinic staff are also available to help.

☑ UWMC Imaging Services: 206-598-6200

☑ Harborview Imaging Services: 206-744-3105

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How is the exam done?

The radiologist or technologist will describe how the examination is done and will review rare contraindications (problems that need special attention). This exam 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 your swallowing process with fluoroscopy (an X-ray unit combined with a TV monitor). As the barium coats the lining of your pharynx and esophagus, images are taken to track the pathway to your stomach. We will help place you in different positions during your exam.

What will I feel during the exam?

There is no discomfort caused by this exam.

After the exam, 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 exam.

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

A radiologist trained to interpret the pharyngogram will review the exam and send a report to your primary care doctor. 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, if needed.