Getting Ready for an Upper GI, Small Bowel Study, Enteroclysis or Esophagram

What are these tests?

These X-ray exams look at parts of the body that digest food. Each uses barium (a white liquid) to help the X-rays show up more clearly. Your doctor will tell you which tests you will have.

- **An upper GI** looks at your esophagus and stomach. (The esophagus is the tube inside the throat. When you swallow, food travels down this tube and into the stomach.)

- **An esophagram** looks at your esophagus.

- **A small bowel study** looks at your small intestine.

- **An enteroclysis, or small bowel enema**, looks at your small intestine.

How do I get ready for my exam?

Please bring a list of your current medicines to your exam. (Include vitamins, minerals and over-the-counter medicines.) Leave your valuables at home.

Tell the doctor if there is a chance you could be pregnant.

☐ **For an upper GI or small bowel study**

- If you had a barium enema within two days of the exam, you will need to take 3 bisacodyl (Dulcolax) tablets the day before your exam.

- Do not eat, chew gum or smoke for 8 hours before your exam. Keep drinking clear liquids until 2 hours before the exam. Clear liquids include water, clear juice, black coffee or clear tea without milk, Gatorade, clear soda.

- The day of your exam, take your usual medicines unless your doctor tells you not to. Take them with small sips of water.

☐ **For an esophagram**

- Do not eat for 8 hours before the exam. Keep drinking clear liquids until 2 hours before the exam.

- You may take pain medicine (with a sip of water) up to 4 hours before the exam.

- Do not swallow any other medicines unless your doctor tells you to. Talk to your doctor to be sure it’s safe to stop your medicines.

☐ **For an enteroclysis**

- Do not eat for 8 hours before the exam. Keep drinking clear liquids until 2 hours before the exam.

- The morning of your exam, you may take your medicines with a small sip of water.

- Plan to have someone drive you to and from the hospital.
What happens during these exams?

You will wear a hospital gown and pajama bottoms. You must remove jewelry and any metal that might cause problems during the X-rays.

**Upper GI**

This exam usually takes about 30 minutes.

You will drink a cup of barium liquid while standing against an upright table. The table will slowly tilt backward until you are lying flat on your back.

We will take X-ray pictures as the barium travels through your digestive tract. We will ask you to roll from side to side in order to get the best pictures.

You may also swallow carbonation crystals, which will create air in your stomach. This makes it easier for your doctor to view the stomach lining.

**Esopahagram**

This exam takes about 30 to 45 minutes.

You will drink a cup of barium liquid while standing in front of an X-ray machine. We will take X-rays as the barium travels down your esophagus and into your stomach. X-rays may be taken while you are standing, sitting and lying down.

You might also swallow barium that's been added to foods and liquids with different textures. This allows a speech pathologist to see how your mouth works and how well foods travel through your esophagus. (A speech pathologist is an expert in speech and swallowing problems.)

**Small bowel study**

You will drink one or two cups of barium liquid while standing. The barium moves through the body at different rates for each person. This means that the exam can take up to 4 hours. The average exam is 2½ hours.

We will take X-rays every 20 to 30 minutes as the barium travels through the small intestine. You will lie on the table for some of the pictures. You may go to the waiting area between pictures.

**Enteroclysis**

This exam takes about 60 minutes.

We will numb the back of your throat with a spray or gel. We will then guide a tube into your nose or mouth, down the throat, through the stomach and into your small bowel (duodenum).

We will inject barium through this tube to coat the lining of the intestine. We will also inject a liquid (called methylcelulose) to help expand the bowel.

You will feel uncomfortable while your small bowel is full. We will take X-rays as quickly as we can. You will feel better after using the toilet.

What should I do after the exam?

Drink lots of fluids in the next one to two days. This will help you pass the rest of the barium. Your stool may be white.

Take walks if possible.

You may take a mild laxative (but check with your doctor first). If you don't have a bowel movement within two days, call your doctor.

When will I know the results?

Your family doctor (or the doctor who ordered the test) will give you the results at your next visit. You or your insurer will then receive two bills: one from the hospital and one from the radiologist (X-ray doctor).

Who should I call with questions?

Please call your Diagnostic Imaging Department.