



Radiology Services

Upper GI series

Understanding Your Upper GI Series Exam

An upper GI series has been requested by your doctor to help diagnose your condition. This exam, performed in the Radiology Department, is an X-ray of the upper digestive tract.

Your upper GI series will be performed by a radiologist—a doctor who specializes in diagnosing illnesses with X-ray studies—and a radiologic technologist—a specialist in the use of X-ray equipment.

A radiologic technologist will talk with you before your upper GI series to make sure you understand the exam and how to prepare for it. This specialist can answer any questions you may have about your exam. **Important:** Before having the exam, tell your doctor or technologist if you are pregnant or think you might be.

We hope this sheet will answer common questions you may have about this procedure.

How should I prepare for the exam?

- Carefully follow all instructions given by your doctor. If you don't, you may have to repeat the exam.
- Do not eat or drink anything after midnight before the exam. Your upper and lower digestive tract must be clear for your exam to be successful. Any food or liquid remaining in the esophagus, stomach or small intestine will show up on X-ray and could be mistaken for an abnormality.
- Your doctor may recommend a laxative, enema or suppository to help cleanse the colon.
- If you are already a patient in the hospital, our staff will help you prepare for the exam.
- Whether or not you are staying in the hospital, preparations for the exam will be basically the same.
- Check with your doctor's office about how much time the exam will take. Be sure to plan your schedule accordingly, allowing plenty of time for your visit.

What should I do just before the exam?

Arrive 30 minutes before your scheduled time to register. Orders for your exam are necessary to perform the

procedure—**we cannot proceed without them**. Please bring a copy of your insurance card. After you are registered in the business office, you will be directed to the Radiology Department.

What will happen during the exam?

- You will remove your clothing and put on a patient gown.
- When you enter the X-ray room, the radiologist and technologist may ask you a few questions. Be sure to tell them if you have nausea or difficulty swallowing.
- You will be placed standing against a table vertically positioned behind a piece of equipment called a *fluoroscope*.
- You will be given a cup of Alka-Seltzer-type crystals to drink and, after that, a cup of thick barium, which coats your stomach. The radiologist uses the fluoroscope to take pictures while you drink.
- When you have drunk the thick barium, the radiologist will lower the table to a horizontal position and take pictures of you in various positions.
- You also will be given thin barium, and the radiologist will take pictures while you drink it.
- After the radiologist has finished taking pictures, the technologist may take additional films.
- Relax and wait while the radiologist examines your X-rays to make sure they include all necessary information. Sometimes, more X-rays are needed.

What happens after the exam?

- For the next day or two, your stools may appear slightly whitish from the barium. The radiologist may suggest that you take a laxative or drink plenty of fluids to help empty the barium from your upper and lower GI tract.
- You may go back to your regular diet immediately following the exam, unless otherwise instructed by your doctor.

How do I get the results?

The radiologist will study the results of your exam and give a report to your personal physician. Your doctor then will discuss these results with you. Sometimes, additional tests or treatment may be recommended.

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What if I have a small bowel series exam?

- Whether your doctor requests this exam with the upper GI series or alone, you still need to go through the same preparations.
- If requested with your upper GI series, you will drink just the thin barium. The technologist will take pictures usually in 15- to 30-minute intervals until the barium reaches the point where the small intestine meets the large intestine.
- If requested alone, the technologist will take a scout film of your abdomen and, according to protocol, you will start drinking at least two eight-ounce glasses of thin barium, with pictures taken at 15- to 30-minute intervals. You may or may not have to drink more barium for it to reach the point where the small intestine meets the large intestine.

- This test typically takes between one and three hours, depending on your digestive system.
- The radiologist will study the results of your exam and give a report to your personal physician. Your doctor then will discuss these results with you. Sometimes, additional tests or treatment may be needed.

We hope you are pleased with the care you receive in the Radiology Department. Our goal is to give you the very best care and attention.

*For more information, please call Patient Scheduling at **(864) 455-7774** or visit **ghs.org/radiology**.*