

Procedures/Diagnostic Tests

Upper GI x-ray

You are scheduled for an upper GI x-ray. This test helps your doctor diagnose abnormalities in your upper gastrointestinal tract. It is also done so that your doctor can assist you with problems you may be having with digestion. This x-ray examines your esophagus, stomach, and small intestine. It takes place in an x-ray room in the Diagnostic Radiology Department.

Preparation

- You may eat or drink whatever you like the day before the test. But please do not eat or drink anything after 10 p.m. the night before the test. If you are taking medications regularly, please check with your nurse or doctor.
- If you have had recent tests (CAT scan, barium enema) in which you have swallowed a contrast agent, a laxative may be necessary to empty your gastrointestinal tract.

Preparation

- You will drink a white liquid containing barium. It tastes chalky and may be lightly flavored with strawberry.
- The x-ray room will be darkened to allow the radiologist to use a special machine called a fluoroscope. With this device, the radiologist can watch the solution as it passes through your gastrointestinal system. A series of x-rays will be taken at various intervals.
- The procedure lasts about 2 hours.

After the procedure

- Drink plenty of liquids.
- If you are not scheduled for other tests, you may eat or drink whatever you like.
- Your bowel movements will look chalky as the barium passes through your intestinal tract.
- You may need to take a laxative to prevent the constipating effects of barium.

If you have questions about the procedure, please ask. Your nurse and doctor are ready to assist you at all times.

Special instructions

This information is prepared specifically for persons taking part in clinical research at the National Institutes of Health Clinical Center and may not apply to patients elsewhere. If you have questions about the information presented here, talk to a member of your health care team.

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