

Upper G. I. Series

(May or may not include a Barium Swallow, and a Small Bowel Series)

What is an Upper G. I. ?

This is an X-ray that allows a radiologist to examine your esophagus, stomach, and the first few feet of your small intestine for ulcers or other inflammatory diseases. It also is used to check for problems with swallowing, hiatal hernias, narrowing of the esophagus, and reflux disorders. A barium swallow will examine your esophagus and the entrance to your stomach.

A Small Bowel Series can be done at the same time as the Upper G. I. or without an Upper G. I. It is used to examine your entire small intestine and the entrance to your large intestine.

Why do I need it?

Your doctor may order this test if you have had:

- Upper abdominal pain
- Nausea and/ or vomiting after eating
- Non-cardiac chest pain
- Trouble swallowing
- G.E.R.D. (gastro-esophageal reflux disease)

It is also used to check for:

- Ulcers
- Narrowing of the esophagus
- Hiatal hernia
- Crohn's disease (an inflammatory disease involving the small intestine)

(More)

What are the risks?

There are very few risks or side effects associated with an Upper G. I. You cannot have this test if you are pregnant or suspect that you are pregnant, unless your doctor determines you really need this test.

The risks of this test are:

- Increase in nausea
- Constipation and or diarrhea
- Abdominal cramping

How do I prepare?

- **If you are diabetic** and you are having a Barium Swallow and/or an Upper G. I. with a Small Bowel Follow Through, please inform the technologist so that your blood glucose levels can be closely monitored. Please ask for the earliest appointment in the morning when booking your exam.
- Please have **nothing to eat or drink after midnight** before your exam. ***This includes smoking, water, coffee, chewing gum, and any medications you usually take in the morning.*** Please bring your medications with you to take after your exam has been completed.
- Wear comfortable clothes that are easy to remove.

What can I expect during the test?

- Please check in at the Radiology Department 15 minutes before your appointment.
- You will be asked to fill out a questionnaire about your allergies and medical history. Make sure you bring a list of your current medications with you.
- Once you have put on a hospital gown, a technologist escorts you to an exam room.
- A technologist will take a “survey film” while you are lying on a table in the X-ray room. This allows the radiologist to make sure that it is okay to proceed with the exam.
- You will then be escorted to the procedure room where the table is in an upright position.
- You will be given a cup of barium to swallow while you are behind a fluoroscope so the radiologist can examine your swallowing action and watch the barium enter your stomach. A series of images are taken while you are swallowing the barium. You may or may not be given some effervescent crystals to produce air to dilate (or open) the esophagus.

- ***If you are only having a Barium Swallow, you are now finished with your exam and you may take your medications.***
- **If you are having an Upper G. I.**, you may be asked to swallow a small packet of crystals mixed with water which will produce gas in your stomach, inflate your stomach, and allow the barium to coat your stomach evenly. The radiologist can then see if there are any problems with the walls of your stomach. Try not to belch the air up if at all possible.
- The table is reclined again and you may be given more barium to drink as quickly as possible. You may be lying on your stomach to do this.
- Once you have swallowed the barium, several more images are taken of your stomach in different positions while you are lying on the table. You are asked to roll up on your sides, lie on your back, or on your stomach while images are taken of your stomach and the first few feet of your small intestine.
- ***If you are only having an Upper G. I., you may now be finished with your exam and you may take your medications.***
- **If you are having a Small Bowel Follow-Through** or *ONLY* a Small Bowel Series, you are given three cups of barium to drink over the next fifteen minutes. Your first image of the area will be taken at fifteen minutes and again at specifically-timed intervals, to follow the progress of the barium through your small intestine.
- This may take as long as 2-5 hours, depending on how quickly your digestive system works. Once the barium enters your large intestine and can be seen, you are brought into the fluoroscopy room and the radiologist examines the junction between your large and small intestine.
- All of your images are examined by the radiologist to determine if any more images are needed.
- Once the quality of the images is checked, you may get dressed and leave (if you are an outpatient). You may eat normally and drink plenty of fluids. You may take your usual medications at this time.

How do I find out the results?

A radiologist reviews the pictures and interprets the results. The radiologist sends a final report to your primary care doctor and/or the doctor who ordered your test. This doctor will talk to you about the results.