

Small Bowel Series

Overview

A Small Bowel Series is an x-ray exam of the small intestine, and is often used in conjunction with an Upper GI Series. This exam requires you to drink barium, which is a type of contrast that allows us to see the anatomy of your digestive tract. There are a few modifications of this exam, some of which require an oil or water based contrast agent instead of barium.

Preparation for the exam:

It is important that you do not eat or drink anything after midnight prior to the day of your exam. Any food or liquid in your stomach and intestines may affect the results of the exam. You may not eat or drink anything the morning of your exam, however, if you are taking any medications, you may take them with a small amount of water. If you are diabetic, please consult with your doctor regarding any medications or instructions before your exam.

Appointment time:

Your appointment will be scheduled ahead of time by your doctors' office through the hospital scheduling service. Please arrive 30 minutes prior to your exam, as you will be required to register. If you are unsure of your appoint time, need to reschedule, or cancel your appointment, please contact your doctors' office or the hospital scheduling service at 770-219-7666 Menu Option 1. Please try to be patient and be assured that we will get to your study as quickly as possible.

Your Small Bowel Series:

You will be escorted into one of our exam rooms by a radiologic technologist and asked to change into a hospital gown. As an alternative, you may arrive wearing sweatpants and a sweatshirt/tee-shirt that does not have buttons, zippers, snaps, or rivets on them. You will be asked to remove any necklaces, earrings, removable dental work, body piercings/jewelry, and brassiere, as metal and hard plastic interferes with the x-ray image. A plain x-ray of your abdomen, called a "scout film" will be taken prior to your exam. This x-ray will show us your basic anatomy, and ensure that there is nothing on your clothing or jewelry that will obscure our films. This also tells us if you followed the preparation required for your exam. After you ingest 16-24 ounces of liquid barium, a radiologic technologist will take plain x-ray pictures of your abdomen so we may see the progression of the barium through your intestines, usually every 20 to 30 minutes. We will ensure that you are comfortable during your wait between x-ray pictures. When the barium has progressed sufficiently through your intestines, the radiologist will enter the exam room and take a few more pictures of your small intestines with the fluoroscope, a special x-ray machine connected to a TV monitor that allows real-time imaging of anatomical structures. You may bring reading material with you, as this exam often takes 2 hours or more to complete.

The conclusion of your exam:

You will receive written, take-home instructions at the conclusion of your exam. You may eat and drink immediately following your exam. It is important that you drink plenty of liquids following your exam to avoid constipation from the barium.

Results:

The radiologist will interpret your exam and the results of your exam will be sent to your doctor.



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Patient Information