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Radiology

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Small Bowel Follow Through

What is it?

A Small Bowel Follow Through is an x-ray exam of your stomach and the upper section of the small intestine. To be able to see these structures on an x-ray they must be outlined with barium. Barium is a liquid that is swallowed and appears white on a x-ray picture.

What will happen to me?

You will be escorted to an x-ray room. The technologist will assist you to sit or stand in front of a vertical x-ray table. The technologist will take a few preliminary pictures. The technologist will hand you a cup of barium to hold when the exam begins. The radiologist (doctor) will instruct you when to drink the barium from the cup. The doctor will also give you directions for holding your breath and to turn into different positions during the exam. While you are drinking the barium, the doctor will watch a fluoroscopic TV screen as the barium flows down from the stomach and out into the small intestine. Several pictures will be taken during the exam to study later. During the exam the technologist will assist you to lie flat on the x-ray table. While your lying on the table, the technologist will take several x-rays from different angles. The pictures will be repeated every 15 minutes so we can observe the flow of barium down from the stomach and into the small intestine.

How long will the test take?

This exam usually takes between 1-3 hours to complete, however, depending on how quickly or how slowly the barium flows through your gastrointestinal tract will determine the length of the exam for different people.

What will I feel, will it hurt?

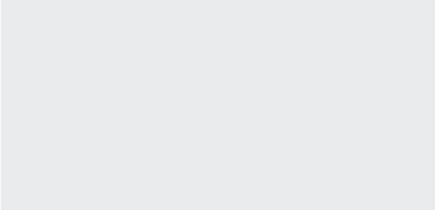
You will be instructed to swallow about 16 ounces of barium. The barium is a chalky, white substance with a consistency similar to a milkshake. Sometimes the barium is flavored to improve the taste. During the exam, the room lights will be turned down so that the TV monitor can be seen. You will be able to hear the x-ray tube running and there will be some mechanical noise as films are loaded and unloaded from under the x-ray table. This exam should not cause you any discomfort.

What will the test show?

The exam can detect ulcers, inflammation, flow patterns and other abnormalities in the gastrointestinal tract.

How do I get ready?

You will not be allowed to have food or drink after midnight the day before your exam. You will need to wear a hospital gown to prevent interference from buttons and snaps,



etc. After the exam, you may be given a mild laxative to help move the barium out of your system. Stools will be light in color for several days as the barium is cleared from your gastrointestinal tract.