

UnityPoint Health - Finley Hospital Radiology Patient/Family Information
GI Series

What is a GI?

A GI (gastrointestinal) Series is an x-ray examination of the upper digestive tract. This includes the esophagus and stomach. An examination of the small intestine, called a 'small bowel study' may be included if requested by your doctor.

Special Note

Before the exam, please tell your doctor if you are or there is a possibility you may be pregnant or are nursing.

Preparation

Please bring your medication list with you to your exam.

If you are normally on a special diet, like a diabetic, you should ask your doctor about planning your diet for this procedure.

It is important that your stomach be empty in order to have a valid study. No food, fluids or medications should be taken after 10 p.m. the evening before the examination. The presence of food in the stomach prevents the barium from outlining the entire stomach wall. Do not chew gum after midnight. No smoking after midnight. Smoking causes excessive secretions, which affect the results of the exam. If you have questions concerning medications please contact your physician.

What Happens During the Test?

The procedure is performed by a radiologist, a physician who specializes in performing and interpreting radiology examinations. The test will take approximately 20 to 30 minutes but there may be a waiting period following the filming process to determine whether or not additional x-rays are needed. Longer if small bowel is also requested.

Seeing the upper digestive area of the body is done by having you drink barium, a thick chalky liquid that is visible on x-ray.

You will also be asked to swallow a crystal like substance. These crystals form gas in the stomach, which helps the stomach show up on x-ray. Try to refrain from burping.

As you drink the barium, the radiologist will observe its flow on a viewing screen that is similar to a TV screen. You will be instructed to lie in various positions while x-rays are taken.

At times, some pressure may be applied to your abdomen and the table may be tilted. Occasionally, it will be necessary for you to remain motionless and to hold your breath. You may be given some medicine, which temporarily slows the natural movement of the bowel.

Additional time is needed for a “small bowel study”. This is a series of x-rays taken over a period of time possibly up to 2 to 3 hours, as the barium passes through the stomach and the small intestine, until barium reaches the large intestine.

After the Test

Following the test, you may go back to your normal diet and activities. The barium is eliminated from your body in your stools, which may appear whitish for 1 to 3 days after your x-ray. Some people experience mild constipation. This can usually be relieved by drinking large amounts of water. However, if you have problems with constipation, you may ask your doctor to prescribe a laxative.

When Will I Know the Results?

The radiologist will review all the x-rays and information shortly after the exam is completed. A written report will be sent to your doctor. Your doctor will discuss these results with you.

Please allow your physician the time needed to review these results.

Name: _____

Exam Date/Time: _____