

# Upper GI Series

## What is an upper GI series?

An upper GI (gastrointestinal) series is a test to look at your child's esophagus, stomach and a portion of their small intestine. It is most often done to learn the sizes and shapes of the organs in the GI tract or to evaluate digestive disorders.

The test is done using a kind of X-ray (fluoroscopy) and a contrast agent that your child will swallow. The contrast agent is called barium.

## How do I prepare my child for the test?

Your child must have an empty stomach for this test. This means that your child cannot have anything to eat or drink by mouth or tube before the test for a period of time depending on their age. The times are as follows:

- 0 to 2 years – nothing to eat or drink for 3 hours before the test
- 2 years and older – nothing to eat or drink for 8 hours before the test

If your child has an allergy to radiographic contrast, we will give you more instructions about how to prepare your child.

Dress your child comfortably, in clothes that are easy to take off. Sweats are a good choice. Your child will be given a gown to change into. You may want to bring a snack or drink for your child to have after the test.

## How do we check in for the appointment?

Arrive 30 minutes before your scheduled appointment. Being late can affect other appointments and can delay your appointment.

Check in at the 4th floor registration desk inside the Whale entrance. After you complete registration, you will be directed to the Radiology reception area.

Upon arrival, females 12 years and older will be required to provide a urine sample for pregnancy screening.

If you will be late or have questions about testing, please call Radiology at 206-987-2133.



## What happens during the upper GI series?

The technologist will explain the test to both you and your child. Your child will need to drink a barium shake, which will make their stomach and intestines show on the X-ray screen. We will mix the shake with a cherry sugar syrup or orange soda, depending on your child's age and preference. Please inform us if your child has any sensitivity to sugar.

We will take X-rays while your child is swallowing the barium and as it flows through their stomach and a portion of their small intestine. A doctor called a radiologist does this by using the fluoroscopy machine, or camera, to follow where the barium goes. The test is not painful, and the camera does not touch your child.

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Your child will need to move around in different positions so that we can see the correct anatomy. The radiologist and technologist will help guide your child. This test takes about 45 minutes.

Parents can stay in the room with their child. Please make other arrangements for siblings. Women who are pregnant or may be pregnant will be asked to leave the room during the test. Please make sure to bring someone else with you who can stay with your child during the test, if needed.

### What happens after the test?

After the test, slowly give your child fluids. The barium may cause constipation, and fluids will help. Encourage your child to take a few sips of water every half hour.

If there are any problems or questions about constipation, please call your primary care provider.

When your child does have a bowel movement, it may look white or grayish — do not be alarmed! The barium may cause this discoloration.

### How do we get the test results?

The images from your child's test are reviewed within 24 hours, and a report will be sent to the doctor who ordered the test.

#### TO LEARN MORE

- Radiology 206-987-2133
- Your Child's Healthcare Provider
- [www.seattlechildrens.org](http://www.seattlechildrens.org)

*Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Please call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201.*

*This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Children's Hospital. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.*



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