

Breath Tolerance Test



What is the test for?

Your child is scheduled to have a breath tolerance test to see if they can absorb a type of sugar. This test looks at how well the intestine absorbs sugar. It does this by measuring how much hydrogen and methane your child exhales. If your child cannot absorb the sugar drink given during the test, intestinal bacteria will break down the sugar to produce hydrogen, and sometimes methane. Lack of absorption can occur with lactose intolerance, but it may occur with other sugars as well.

How do I prepare my child for the test?

An overnight fast is required. Your child cannot eat or drink anything except water for 10 hours before the test.

The day before the test, avoid foods that digest slowly such as beans and complex carbohydrates such as bran and high fiber cereals. Do not allow your child to smoke, sleep, or do heavy exercise 30 minutes before or during the test.

Tell your doctor if your child has been on antibiotics within the past 2 weeks. Antibiotics can interfere with the test, since they kill bacteria that produce hydrogen and methane.

To Learn More

- Children's Consulting Nurses 206-987-2500
- Your child's healthcare provider
- www.seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child's nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.
- For Deaf and hard of hearing callers: 206-987-2280 (TTY).

Are there any side effects?

Your child may have bloating, diarrhea, and gas if the sugar is not digested.

What happens during the test?

First, we will ask your child to breathe into a plastic tube. This will give us a baseline measurement.

Second, we will give your child a sugar drink.

Third, we will collect breath samples every 30 minutes to look for a rise in hydrogen and methane. The highest levels are often seen within 2 hours. Sometimes we need to take another sample at 2½ hours.

What if the baseline measurement is too high?

If the fasting baseline is too high we may have to reschedule the test. If this happens, make sure your child has nothing to eat for 10 to 12 hours before the test. Water is OK.

When will I know about the test results?

Results are sent to the doctor who ordered your test. Your doctor will explain the test results and answer your questions. Please contact your ordering doctor for follow-up.