

# Gastric Emptying Exam

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## What is a gastric emptying exam?

A gastric emptying exam is a test that measures how fast your child's stomach digests food. We also study esophageal reflux in your child during this exam. Esophageal reflux is when acid from your child's stomach moves backwards into their esophagus (tube that carries food, liquids and saliva from mouth to stomach).

A tracer (radiopharmaceutical) is needed for this exam. We will mix it in milk, formula or oatmeal and have your child drink or eat it. If your child does not eat by mouth, we will use their G-tube.

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

- Your child cannot have anything to eat or drink for 4 hours before the exam. Your child should not receive barium (radiographic contrast agent) 48 hours before the exam.
- Milk or formula is most often used for this exam, but other options are available. Solid food is sometimes requested by the ordering doctor.
- If your child has an allergy to milk, please contact Radiology at 206-987-2089 ahead of time.
- If your child has a G-tube, please bring enough formula for one feeding, as well as the right tubing and connectors.
- Dress your child comfortably in clothes without zippers or metal snaps. Sweats are a good choice.
- We have videos your child can watch or they can bring their favorite DVD from home to watch during the exam.

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### To Learn More

- Radiology  
206-987-2089
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- [seattlechildrens.org](http://seattlechildrens.org)

### Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your 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.

### How do we check in for the appointment?

Arrive 20 minutes before your scheduled appointment. Being late can affect other appointments and can delay your appointment. If you will be late, please call Radiology at 206-987-2089.

Check in at the level 6 registration desk inside the Ocean entrance. After you complete registration, you will be directed to the Radiology reception area.

### What happens during the exam?

The technologist will explain the exam to you and your child. Based on your child's preference or medical situation, we will ask them to drink milk (chocolate or white) or formula. Your child will need to finish the milk within 5 minutes. If your child does not eat by mouth, the technologist will give formula through your child's G-tube.

After drinking, your child will lie on the table and the scan will begin. We will take images for one hour. The camera will be above the table and will come close to, but will not touch, your child. Your child will be able to watch a movie during the scan. We do not use anesthesia for this exam.

### Does the gastric emptying exam use radiation?

Yes, your child will be exposed to a small amount of radiation. We understand that radiation dose is a special concern for children. To minimize how much radiation your child is exposed to, we customize the gastric emptying exam based on your child's age, weight and area to be examined.

If you have questions about the exam and whether it is needed, please contact the doctor who ordered it for your child.

### What happens after the exam?

There are no special instructions for your child to follow after the exam.

The images from your child's radiology procedure are typically reviewed by a radiologist within 24 hours and a report will be sent to the doctor who ordered the test. If you have a clinic or doctor appointment scheduled, the doctor will review the results with you then. If you do not have a visit scheduled, you should call your child's doctor for the results.