

Procedure Information: Small Bowel Series

What is a Small Bowel Series?

A Small Bowel Series is a radiographic examination that evaluates the anatomy and function of the small intestine. Barium is orally ingested and radiographic images are obtained every 30 mins to watch the movement of barium throughout your small intestine. Many times a Small Bowel Series is ordered to follow an Upper GI Series. The barium that was ingested for the UGI is just followed through the small bowel until it reaches the large colon and you only have to drink the barium once.

When is a Small Bowel Series ordered?

Small bowel exams are ordered to detect function and various abnormalities such as:

- Ulcers
- Tumors
- Inflammation of structures
- Hernias
- Blockages
- Scarring Some symptoms you may be having may also prompt a Small Bowel

Series to be ordered by your doctor such as:

- Abdominal pain
- Diarrhea/constipation
- Blood in stools
- Weight loss

Patient Preparation

Nothing to eat or drink anything past midnight the night before your exam.

You may take a prescription medicine with a sip of water. If you are diabetic, call your doctor for diet and medicine instructions. Report 15

minutes before your scheduled appointment time.

What happens during a Small Bowel Series procedure?

You will be taken to a private changing room to put on a hospital gown.

A radiographer will take you to an exam room, verify your identity (name and birth date) and obtain medical history for the radiologist.

A preliminary image of your abdomen will be taken with you lying flat on the exam table. This gives the radiologist a starting image of your abdomen before you drink the barium. A radiographer will then help you off the table, escort you to a small private waiting room and ask you to drink a liquid barium mixture which resembles a white milk shake. Once you drink the cup of barium an image of your abdomen will be taken again and every 30 minutes until the barium has moved through your entire small bowel (20-30 feet) and start to enter into your large bowel. To complete your exam, the radiographer or radiologist will press on your abdomen and take a few radiographic images of the junction of your small and large bowel.

Length of procedure

The exam varies in length for each individual. Average time for this barium study is 1.5 - 2 hours. For some people the barium moves quickly and for some people it moves slow and can last several hours. Please be prepared to stay for entire exam.

What will I experience during and after the procedure?

A fullness or heaviness in your stomach from drinking the barium. The barium may color your stools white or gray for 48 to 72 hours after the procedure. Upon completion of the exam, you are asked to drink plenty of fluids to help your body get rid of the barium. You could have temporary constipation from the barium. You may also take a mild laxative to help rid your body of the barium but only with your doctor's approval. Please return to normal diet unless your doctor tells you otherwise.

What are the risks?

Some barium can be retained causing a blockage in the digestive tract. Consult your doctor if you have concerns following the exam.