

## What is a Small Bowel Series?

### PATIENT/FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

#### What is a small bowel series?

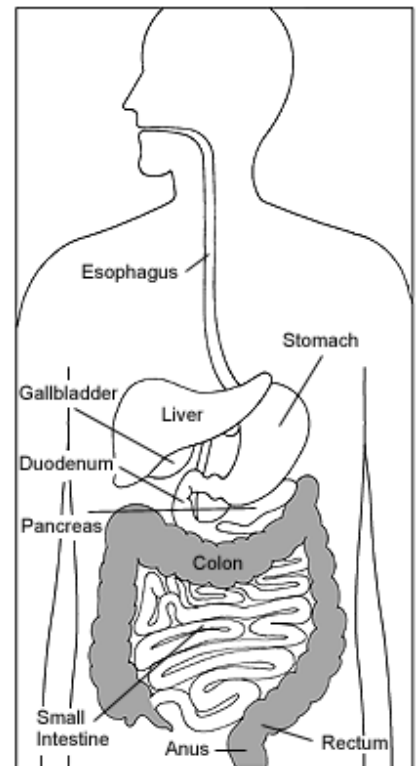
A small bowel series is a test performed to evaluate the small bowel, also known as the small intestine, and is often used to evaluate symptoms of abdominal pain or diarrhea.

#### How should I prepare for the small bowel series?

- You will be asked not to eat or drink anything after midnight of the night before your examination. Your doctor will provide specific instructions for you to follow.
- You will be asked to remove metal items such as jewelry, eyeglasses, and clothing with zippers or metal snaps which may show up on and obscure the images.
- You should allow up to 4 hours for this examination. The length of the exam varies according to how long it takes the barium to move through your small bowel.

#### How is the small bowel series performed?

- A brief history will be taken by the technologist.
- You will be given at least 2 cups of Barium to drink. Barium is a thick white liquid which coats the lining of your intestines, making them visible on the x-ray films.
- A series of pictures of your abdomen will be taken as the barium passes through your small bowel.
- Once the barium passes through your small intestine and into the colon, the radiologist will take images of your small intestine with an x-ray machine called a fluoroscope.
- You will be asked to move in different positions so that the radiologist can view different portions of your small intestine.
- The radiologist may press on your abdomen to improve visualization of portions of the small intestine.



Source: National Digestive Diseases  
Clearinghouse @  
<http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov>

## **What should I expect after my exam?**

You will pass whitish colored bowel movements from the barium for a few days after the test. You should drink extra fluids after the procedure (unless you are on fluid restriction) to prevent constipation. Speak with your doctor about taking a laxative if you have a tendency to get constipated.

## **Is a small bowel series safe?**

X-rays are a form of energy that exists in nature, emanating from outer space, rocks, and even soil. The x-ray machine produces an x-ray beam which is carefully limited to the body part being examined. No radiation remains in your body after the examination.

## **An Important Note**

**For female patients, if there is any possibility you may be pregnant or if you are breast feeding, it is important to tell this to the technologist before the x-ray.**

Speak with the x-ray technologist if you have questions or concerns regarding your small bowel series. A formal report will be sent to your doctor within days following your procedure. Your doctor will speak with you regarding the results.

*Source:* Greenwich Hospital Radiology Department

*For more Patient Fact Sheets, see the Greenwich Hospital web site at [www.greenhosp.org](http://www.greenhosp.org) and Click on Patients & Visitors, then Patient Education*

6/05, 8/05