

What is a Small Bowel Series?

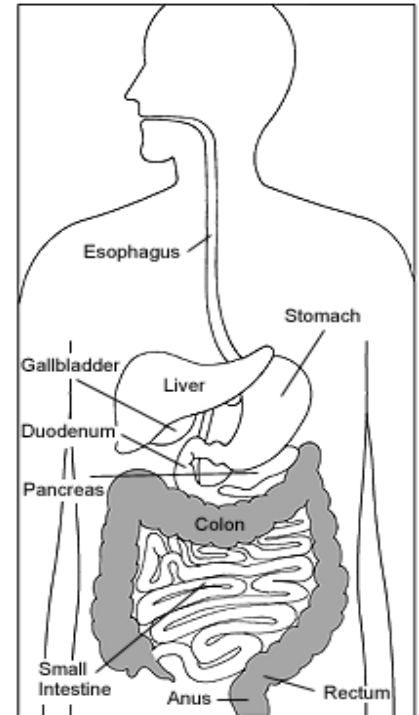
PATIENT/FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

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.



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

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.

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 and Click on Patients & Visitors, then Patient Education