

About Your Gastric Emptying Scan

What You Need to Know and Do

A gastric emptying scan measures how quickly food travels from the stomach into the small bowel (intestine). It is used to see if it takes longer than normal for food to leave your stomach.

This delay could be caused by an obstruction or by a problem in the movement of your stomach muscles.

During the test, you are given a meal to eat that contains a small amount of radioactive substance (called a tracer). The radioactive material is safe.

Scans of your stomach are done. The tracer shows up clearly on the scans and tracks the food as it moves through your stomach.

What should I do before my gastric emptying scan appointment?

- Let your doctor know of any medicines you are taking, including vitamins, herbs, and over-the-counter medicine. Some of them may need to be stopped in the days before the test.
- Don't eat or drink anything for at least 6 hours before the test. Don't take any gastric or pain medicine.

Let your technologist know if you:

- are taking any medicines
- had recent X-rays or tests that use any substances, such as barium
- have been having nausea or vomiting
- have had recent surgery, or have another health problem, such as diabetes, or allergies
- could be pregnant or are breastfeeding.

What will happen during my test?

- You will be given a meal to eat. This may be a solid food, such as eggs, or a liquid, such as water. If you're allergic to the food, you will get another type of food.
- Both the food and drink contain a small amount of tracer. The tracer has no flavor.
- After you finish the meal, images are taken with a machine called a scanner. The images are taken periodically during a 2 to 4 hour time period.
- The scanner detects the amount of tracer in your stomach. As food is emptied from the stomach, the amount of tracer decreases.
- The technologist will measure the rate at which food leaves your stomach.
- You can leave the room in between the times the pictures are taken. But don't eat, drink, or do any strenuous activities during this time.
- Once the last set of pictures is taken, the test is over.

What should I do after my test?

- You can go home shortly after the test.
- Your doctor will contact you and discuss the test results with you. This will probably happen a few days after the test.