

Gastric Emptying Scan

What is a Gastric Emptying Scan?

A gastric emptying scan is an imaging study that takes pictures of your child's stomach. It is performed in the Nuclear Medicine department and uses a special kind of camera called a gamma camera. This camera **does not** give off radiation. We do the study by having your child eat food that has been mixed with a medicine called a "tracer". This medicine contains a small amount of radioactive material. It travels through your child's stomach so the gamma camera can take pictures.

These tracer medicines (called radiopharmaceuticals) are carefully tested. Side effects are rare and give low radiation exposure. <http://snmmi.files.cms-plus.com/Patients/Nuclear%20Medicine%20and%20Radiation%20Safety%20Factsheet.pdf>.

Why is this exam performed?

A gastric emptying scan measures how long it takes for solid food or liquid to go through the stomach.

What to expect

Since your child will be awake for the exam, one parent or guardian may be with the child in the exam room. It may be helpful to make plans for other siblings. For safety reasons, you will be asked to step out of the exam room if there is a chance you could be pregnant.

Preparing your child is key to the success of this study. To help prepare your child, our Child Life Specialists will help ease your child's fear and anxiety. Please let a staff member know if you are interested in a Child Life consultation at no additional cost.

Your child **should not** have anything to eat 6 hours prior and nothing to drink for 4 hours prior to the exam.

Gastric emptying exams are ordered one of three ways: 90 minute solid meal, 90 minute liquid meal, or 4 hour solid standard meal. The meal must be completed in 10 minutes for solid food and 5 minutes for liquid meals.

If your child will not be able to eat solid food then they will use the liquid meal they normally eat. **Please bring** the formula, Pediasure, or milk that your child normally drinks. **Please bring** any supplies that you normally use at home to feed your child (i.e. G-tube connection, favorite bottle, or cup).

The agreed upon meal will be mixed with a small amount of radioactive material. It will not change the taste of the meal.

Your child and the accompanying adult will be taken to the procedure room by a technologist and asked to change into a gown. The technologist will ask why the study is being done and explain it to your child.

For this 1 ½ – 4 hour exam:

- To make sure your child is safe and will hold still for the test, we use "seatbelts" to help. Seatbelts can be Velcro straps, swaddle blankets, or tape straps. They can be quickly removed in the event of an emergency.
- Once your child has consumed the meal, the child will be positioned on the table for imaging under the gamma camera. The table will move slowly under the camera during the exam. Although the camera will be close, it will not touch your child.

- If your child is able to eat the preferred meal, they will receive the 4 hour exam. We will take a one minute picture 5 times over the course of the 4 hours.
- If your child ate an alternative meal, we will image continuously for 90 minutes.
- Your child will need to remain still for the entire imaging portion of the exam.
- We have televisions in all exam rooms. Please feel free to bring your tablet with your child's favorite movie.
- You will be given discharge instructions at the end of your appointment.

Receiving your Gastric Emptying Scan results

Call your doctor for a follow up appointment as instructed. You can also call the doctor who ordered the study for the results 24 to 48 hours after the test. If you have any additional questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to call Radiology Nursing at 832-826-5371.

If you would like a CD of your child's study, please call the film library at 832-822-1202. The Radiologist's report will also be included on the CD.