Breath Test: Nuclear Medicine

A breath test shows the presence of bacteria in your stomach. It provides helpful information in treating stomach ulcers and inflammation. The exam, done in the Nuclear Medicine department, uses a radioactive tracer. The amount of radiation used in this test is small, and well within limits that are safe. The test lasts about 1 hour.

Before the Test

For 30 days before the test, do not take any antibiotics or Pepto Bismol®

For 14 days before the test, do not take Sucralfate (Carafate®) or any medicines that reduce acid in your stomach, such as:

- Esomeprazole (Nexium®)
- Lansoprazole (Prevacid®)
- Omeprazole (Prilosec®)
- Pantoprazole (Protonix®)

Do not eat or drink anything after midnight of the night before your test.

On the day of the test, plan to arrive 15 minutes before your test time. Be sure to bring:

- A list of all your current medications (prescription and over-the-counter)
- Medical insurance information
- Medicare card (Medicare patients only)

Please come to the 8th Floor reception desk in the Galter Pavilion, 201 East Huron Street.

Parking is available for patients and visitors in the garage at 222 East Huron Street, across from the Feinberg and Galter Pavilions. For discounted rates, please bring your parking ticket with you. Tickets can be validated at the Customer Services Desks on the 1st and 2nd floor of the Feinberg and Galter Pavilions, and the 1st floor of Prentice (including the Prentice 24-hour desk near the Superior Street entrance).

During the Test

When you arrive in the Nuclear Medicine department, a doctor or nurse will ask you questions about your medical history. If there is a chance you could be pregnant or if you are breastfeeding, please tell the technologist before the test.
You will then be given a small capsule to swallow with a glass of warm water. Three minutes after taking the capsule, the tech will ask you to drink another glass of warm water. Seven minutes after drinking the 2nd glass of water, you will be asked to hold your breath for 10 seconds. Then you exhale into 2 balloons through a straw. The test is complete after the second balloon is filled.

**After the Test**

You may resume your normal activities, diet and medication after the test. The test results are sent to your doctor within 5 business days of the exam.

**Northwestern Medicine—Health Information Resources**

For more information, contact Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Alberto Culver Health Learning Center (HLC) at hlc@nm.org, or by calling 312.926.5465. You may also visit the HLC on the 3rd floor, Galter Pavilion at 251 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL. Health information professionals can help you find the information you need and provide you with personal support at no charge.

For more information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at nm.org.