

Lower Gastrointestinal (GI) Exam

A lower GI uses a contrast material, barium, to show the large intestine, or colon, which is part of the GI tract. A radiologist, a doctor specially trained in performing and reading GI exams, will perform this test. A lower GI test lasts about 1 hour and is done in the Radiology (X-ray) department.

Please tell your doctor and the X-ray staff if you might be pregnant or if you have had a problem with this exam in the past.

Preparation for the Test

You will need to purchase 2 bottles of Magnesium Citrate[®] at least 1 day before the exam. You can purchase these 2 bottles at most drug stores or at the hospital pharmacy.

Day Before Your Test

Take only clear liquids on the day before your test (water, apple juice, bouillon, soup, tea or coffee without milk or sugar).

Make sure you drink plenty of fluids.

- 11:00 a.m.: Drink the first bottle of Magnesium Citrate[®].
- 4:00 p.m.: Drink the second bottle of Magnesium Citrate[®].
- You should have nothing to eat or drink after midnight.

Day of the Test

Do not take anything by mouth the morning of the exam.

Be sure to bring:

- Your doctor's written order for the test.
- A list of allergies.
- A list of all your current medications (prescription, over-the-counter, and herbals).
- Medical insurance information.
- Medicare card (Medicare patients only).

Parking is available for patients and visitors in the garage at 222 E. Huron, 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; 1st floor of Prentice (including the Prentice 24-hour desk near the Superior entrance).

Prior to the Test

You will be shown to a dressing area for changing into the gown. All underwear must be removed at this time. Please remove any loose or hanging jewelry, such as necklaces. It is not usually necessary to remove rings or watches, but you may wish to do so for comfort and security.

During the Lower GI Test

Before the test begins, the technologist (tech) and radiologist will explain the test and the equipment used.

The X-ray staff will instruct you to lie on the X-ray table on your left side. The tech will gently insert the enema tip into your rectum using lubricating gel for comfort.

The enema bag will be adjusted so that the barium flows easily into your colon. As the barium flows into your colon the radiologist will take some X-rays.

When the radiologist has finished filling your colon with barium, you will lie in different positions (such as on your back, side, etc.). **It is important that you hold the barium in your colon until all the X-rays are taken.** The test is over once the X-rays are completed. At this time, you may use the bathroom.

After the Test

You may resume your normal activities and diet after the test. It is suggested that you drink an additional 1 or 2 glasses of water.

You will note a temporary change in the color and frequency of your bowel movements. If any changes last more than 2 to 3 days, please contact your doctor.

If you have any questions or concerns about this test, please ask your doctor, nurse or radiology staff.

Health Information Resources

For more information, visit one of Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Health Learning Centers. These state-of-the-art health libraries are located on the third floor of the Galter Pavilion and on the first floor of the Prentice Women's Hospital. Health information professionals are available to help you find the information you need and provide you with personalized support at no charge. You may contact the Health Learning Centers by calling 312-926-LINK (5465) or by sending an e-mail to hlc@nmh.org.

For additional information about Northwestern Memorial Hospital, please visit our Web site at www.nmh.org.

Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar a el departamento de representantes para pacientes al 312-926-3112.

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Developed by: Department of Radiology

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For more information about Northwestern Memorial Hospital, please visit www.nmh.org.

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