

Lower Gastrointestinal Test

A lower gastrointestinal (GI) test is an X-ray examination of the large intestine (colon), which is part of your GI tract. This test uses a contrast material such as barium to show your colon. A water-soluble contrast material may be used instead of barium for examinations after bowel surgery. A radiologist, who is a physician specially trained in performing and reading GI exams, will perform the test. A lower GI test lasts about 1 hour and is done in the Radiology (X-ray) Department.

Please tell your physician, nurse or radiology technician (tech) if you:

- Are pregnant, might be pregnant or are trying to get pregnant
- Are allergic to contrast materials containing iodine
- Have had a problem with this test (or other contrast tests) in the past

Preparation for the test

You will need to purchase 2 bottles of the laxative, magnesium citrate, to use to empty your bowel the day before your test. You can purchase magnesium citrate at most drugstores or at the hospital pharmacy.

If you are allergic to contrast materials used in the test, your physician may prescribe medications for you to take before the test.

Day before your test

It is important that your colon be empty for the test. Follow these instructions (unless you have an ostomy):

- Drink only clear liquids the day before your test (water, apple juice, bouillon, soup, tea or coffee without milk or sugar).
- Do not eat solid food.
- Make sure you drink plenty of fluids.
- Follow the bowel preparation instructions.
 - 11 am: Drink the first bottle of magnesium citrate.
 - 4 pm: Drink the second bottle of magnesium citrate.
- You should have nothing to eat or drink after midnight.

If you have an ostomy, you do not need to follow a clear liquid diet or do the bowel preparation with magnesium citrate for the test. Do not eat or drink anything after midnight.

Day of the test

You may take any medicine ordered by your physician with small sips of water. Do not take anything else by mouth the morning of the test. Be sure to bring:

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

Please come to the 4th floor Reception Desk in Galter Pavilion, 201 East Huron Street.

Parking is available for patients and visitors in the garage at 222 East Huron Street, across from Feinberg and Galter pavilions. For a discounted rate, please bring your parking ticket with you. Your ticket can be validated at the Customer Services Desks on the 1st, 2nd and 8th floors of Feinberg and Galter pavilions, and the 1st floor of Prentice Women's Hospital.

Before the test

You will be shown to a dressing area to change into a gown. All clothing below the waist, including 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 test

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

They 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 and side). **It is important that you hold the barium in your colon until all the X-rays are taken.** The test is finished 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 in the 24 hours following the test.

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

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