

What is an Upper GI Series?

An upper gastrointestinal (GI) series is an X-ray exam done to look at the esophagus, stomach, and the uppermost part of the small intestine (the duodenum). The upper GI series can show a blockage, abnormal growth, ulcer, or a problem with the way an organ is working.

Note: If you are pregnant, you must notify your doctor and/or the radiological technologist before your exam.

How Do I Schedule My Exam?

1. If your doctor orders additional exams – like an abdominal ultrasound or CT scan as well as an upper GI series – ask your doctor to make sure these exams are scheduled in the right order.
2. **Call to schedule your upper GI series.** Your doctor will give you a referral form that has the location of your exam and the phone number to call to make your appointment.
3. **Bring the referral form to your exam or have your doctor's office fax the referral form to the radiology department.**

How Do I Prepare for My Exam?

- Be sure to bring your insurance card with you to the appointment.
- **Ask your primary doctor when to stop taking any of your routine medications before the exam.** Take only the most important medications with a sip of water early in the morning (for example, any heart and blood pressure medications).
- **Nothing to eat or drink after 11:00 p.m. on the evening before your exam. This includes no water, coffee, candy or chewing gum.** Your stomach must be empty for this exam.
- No breakfast, lunch, or cigarette smoking on the day of your exam.
- Do not swallow water when brushing your teeth.
- If you are also having your small bowel examined, please bring something to read since this exam is done over a 1–3 hour period of time (sometimes longer).

Where Do I Go on the Day of My Exam?

Check your referral form for the location (campus) of your exam:

<u>Pacific Campus</u>	<u>California Campus</u>	<u>Davies Campus</u>
Phone: (415) 600-3232 2333 Buchanan Street 2 nd Floor, Radiology	Phone: (415) 600-0800 3700 California Street Lobby Level	Phone: (415) 600-6180 Castro & Duboce Streets North Tower (Level A)
<u>Parking:</u> 2405 Clay St. at Webster St.	<u>Parking:</u> 460 Cherry St. at California St. and 3838 California St.	<u>Parking:</u> 45 Castro St. at Duboce St.

What Can I Expect During the Exam?

- You may need an X-ray of your abdomen before the exam.
- You lie on an X-ray table. The radiologist uses X-ray (fluoroscopy) to look at your internal organs. The table may be moved around and tilted into both horizontal and vertical positions during your exam.
- You may be asked to swallow a small amount of effervescent granules with an ounce of water at the beginning of your exam. This will release gas inside your stomach and can help the radiologist see the intestinal lining better. This gas may make you feel like you need to belch or burp. Try to avoid this for a short time at the beginning of the exam to get the best results.
- You will drink barium – a thick, white, milkshake-like liquid. The taste may be unpleasant to you. You may experience mild abdominal fullness with this exam.
- Barium coats the inside of the esophagus, stomach, and duodenum, and makes them show up more clearly on X-rays. The radiologist can see the areas where the digestive system is blocked. Using a machine called a fluoroscope, the radiologist is also able to watch your digestive system work as the barium moves through it.
- During this exam, you will be asked to move around from side to side and from front to back. This allows the barium liquid to coat the entire lining of your stomach and allows the radiologist to take pictures from different angles.
- An upper GI series takes about 15 minutes to 1 hour to complete. X-rays of the small intestine may take up to 3 hours.

What Can I Expect After the Exam?

- You may eat and drink normally after the exam. You should drink extra water or juice to help the barium pass through your intestine.
- You may drive yourself home or return to work after this exam.
- For a day or two after the exam, your bowel movements may be white or light in color as your body clears the barium from your system.
- For some patients, the barium may cause constipation. Call your doctor if you have concerns about constipation.

When Do I Get the Results of the Exam?

Usually, the results of your upper GI series will be given to your primary or referring doctor within 24 to 48 hours of your exam.

More Ways to Learn

Go to www.cpmc.org/learning.

Frequently Asked Questions

Question: How long does the upper GI series take?

Answer: The exam usually takes 15 minutes to 1 hour to complete.

Question: Does an upper GI barium series cause any discomfort?

Answer: You may experience abdominal fullness with this exam.

Question: Can I drive after this exam?

Answer: Yes, you may drive after this exam.

Question: Can I return to work after this exam?

Answer: Yes, you may return to work after this exam.

Produced by the Center for Patient and Community Education in association with the staff and physicians at California Pacific Medical Center. Date: 4/06.

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Funded by: A generous donation from the Mr. and Mrs. Arthur A. Ciocca Foundation.

Note: This information is not meant to replace any information or personal medical advice which you get directly from your doctor(s). If you have any questions about this information, such as the risks or benefits of the treatment listed, please ask your doctor(s).