

What is a Small Bowel Follow-Through?

A Small Bowel Follow-Through is a special x-ray examination from the first part of your small bowel (the duodenum) to the area where the small bowel empties into the large bowel (the ileo-cecal valve).

What special instructions do I need to follow to be ready for my examination?

1. If you are unable to keep your appointment, please let us know as soon as possible. Should you be admitted to hospital, please inform your Health Care provider about your appointment. If there is a possibility that you are pregnant, please tell your Health Care Provider as the exam may need to be postponed or cancelled or your problem investigated in another way.
2. Please do not use perfume or other scented products on the day of your study.
3. Please arrive 15 minutes prior to your appointment and check-in at patient registration.
4. You will need to purchase Dulcolax tablets and suppositories from a Pharmacy for use on the day before your scheduled appointment.
5. To empty your bowel, three (3) 5 mg Dulcolax (laxative) tablets should be taken after the evening meal on the day before the exam. One Dulcolax suppository should be used rectally one hour before bedtime. No solid food should be eaten after 9:00 p.m., but you may drink a small amount of clear fluids as desired up to the time of your appointment.

Who will perform my examination?

This examination will be primarily performed by a Medical Radiation Technologist specializing in x-ray imaging. A Radiologist (X-Ray) will take some additional images near the end of your exam.

What happens to me during my examination?

You will need to change into a hospital gown for this examination. Once you have changed, the technologist will provide you with two large cups of a chalky liquid substance (barium) to drink over a 15 minute period.

After you finish drinking, you will be taken into an x-ray room and an x-ray picture will be taken of your abdomen. The technologist will show this picture to the radiologist who will decide the timing of the next picture. This will continue until the barium reaches the last part of your small bowel.

At this point, you will be brought back into the x-ray room for a few more pictures taken by the radiologist. For some of these pictures, a compression paddle may be used to push down on your lower right side to spread out loops of bowel to see them better.

After exam is completed, you will be able to change and leave the department. This exam can take anywhere from one to four hours, depending on the individual, with an average time of one to two hours.

Should I expect any after effects as a result of my examination?

There should be no after effects from the examination. You may immediately return to your normal diet. You are encouraged to drink at least eight glasses of water a day for the next two days to allow the barium to pass through your bowel more easily. If you are on a fluid restricted diet, discuss this with your Health Care Provider.

When and how will I know the results?

Your Health Care Provider will usually have a written report from the Radiologist within one week of your examination. You should obtain the results from your own Health Care Provider. If there is any urgency, your Health Care Provider is more than welcome to contact the Diagnostic Imaging Department by telephone.

If you have any questions or concerns that have not been answered here, please feel free to ask the Diagnostic Imaging staff involved in your examination.