

*The* ROYAL MARSDEN

NHS Foundation Trust

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# Glucose Hydrogen/Methane Breath Testing

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**Endoscopy Suite**

**Patient Information**



**NHS**



## What is a breath test?

A glucose hydrogen/methane breath test is used to make several diagnoses including lactose intolerance, carbohydrate malabsorption and small bowel bacterial overgrowth.

## Why am I having a breath test?

If the working of your digestive tract has been changed by surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy or other conditions, you may have symptoms such as watery loose stool, a need to rush to the lavatory, wind and bloating.

If certain gases (hydrogen and methane) in your breath are abnormally high, it will help us to establish whether your symptoms are due to specific foods in your diet. In small bowel bacterial overgrowth, the test is used to try and detect the presence of germs in the small bowel.

## What preparation will I need for my breath test?

We will ask you to change your diet (see page 2) so that any breath test measurements recorded are accurate. It is important that you follow the instructions below very carefully. If these are not followed, your procedure may have to be cancelled.

If any of the following apply to you, please contact the endoscopy suite a few days prior to your appointment:

- You have any concerns/queries
- You have diabetes
- You are taking chemotherapy drugs
- You are taking anti-epileptic drugs
- You are taking a medication which is taken daily at a set time
- You are due to undergo a gastroscopy and/or colonoscopy on the same day as the breath test procedure.

**The following food influences the test result and should not be consumed for 24 hours before the test:**

- Canned drinks, carbonated (fizzy) drinks and fruit juices
- Alcohol
- Fruit (including fresh, tinned, stewed, dried, or preserved)
- All vegetables except potatoes (no skin)
- Sweets, chocolate
- Sugar
- Marmalade, jam, honey, chocolate spread, peanut butter
- Tomato ketchup, brown sauce, pickle, chutney, chilli sauce
- Wholegrain cereals such as weetabix, all bran, bran flakes, muesli
- Brown rice or pasta
- Wholemeal bread, rolls, chapattis, rotis, naan
- Lentils, pulses
- Nuts.

**12 hours before the test:**

- You must not eat or drink anything except water for 12 hours before the test, for example, if your test is at 8am, stop eating and drinking after 8pm on the previous night
- You are allowed to drink water at any time
- Take your evening medications as usual.

**On the morning of your test**

- Please clean your teeth. Avoid mouthwash unless it is sugar free.
- Unless you are informed otherwise, please do not take your usual medication (as it may be sugar coated) before the test but bring all your medication with you to the hospital so you can take it after the test is complete.
- Do not smoke before the test as this can cause a false positive result.

## What will happen when I come up for the breath test?

- You will complete a questionnaire about your symptoms
- We will ask you to blow (exhale) into a bag for a baseline measurement
- We will give you a small amount of sweet liquid to drink
- We will ask you to blow (exhale) in to a bag at specific times until the test is completed
- Please write down any bowel symptoms you experience during the test.

## What happens afterwards?

We will give you a drink and a sandwich following the procedure and you can take your usual medications. Please allow 2.5 hours to be at the hospital.

## When will I know the results?

The results will be sent to your GP and the consultant who referred you for the test. A follow up appointment will be arranged if it is needed.

## Contact details

For routine advice, please contact

**The Endoscopy Suite:                      020 7811 8328 / 0207 811 8320**  
(Monday to Friday, 8am - 5pm)

If we cannot take your call, please leave an answerphone message. These will be collected twice daily (Monday to Friday) and a member of the Endoscopy Suite will return your call.

**Outside of working hours              020 7352 8171**

Please call the main switchboard and ask to speak to the clinical site practitioner.

Alternatively, for medication related advice, contact

**Medicines Information                      020 7661 3456**  
(Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm)

## **The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline - 020 8915 6899**

You can ring the Hotline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Call us straight away if you are feeling unwell or are worried about the side effects of cancer treatments.

This service provides specialist advice and support to all Royal Marsden patients, as well as to their carers, and both hospital and community-based doctors and nurses caring for Royal Marsden patients.

For further information, please visit The Royal Marsden website:  
*[www.royalmarsden.nhs.uk/your-care/support-services/royal-marsden-macmillan-hotline](http://www.royalmarsden.nhs.uk/your-care/support-services/royal-marsden-macmillan-hotline)*

## References

This booklet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this booklet are available on request from:

The Royal Marsden Help Centre

Freephone: 0800 783 7176

Email: [patientcentre@rmh.nhs.uk](mailto:patientcentre@rmh.nhs.uk)

No conflicts of interest were declared in the production of this booklet.

If you would like this information sheet in a different format, please contact the PALS office on 0800 783 7176 or talk to the clinical staff responsible for your care.



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[royalmarsden.org](http://royalmarsden.org)

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