

Lower Gastrointestinal Test

A lower gastrointestinal (GI) test is an X-ray exam 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. The care team may use a water-soluble contrast material instead of barium for examinations after bowel surgery. A radiologist, a physician specially trained in performing and reading GI exams, will do the test. A lower GI test lasts about 1 hour. You will have the test 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 iodine contrast materials
- Have had a problem with this test (or other contrast tests) in the past

Preparation for the test

You will need to buy 2 bottles of the laxative magnesium citrate. You will use it to empty your bowel the day before your test. You can buy magnesium citrate at most drug stores 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 for your colon to 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 1st bottle of magnesium citrate.
 - 4 pm: Drink the 2nd bottle of magnesium citrate.
- Do not eat or drink anything 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.

Day of the test

You may take any medication 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.

Patients and visitors can park 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. You can validate your ticket 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

The care team will take you to the dressing area and ask you to change into a hospital gown. Take off all your clothing below the waist, including your underwear. Remove any loose or hanging jewelry, such as necklaces. You can usually keep wearing a ring or watch, but you may want to take them off for comfort and security.

During the test

Before the test, the tech and radiologist will explain the test and the equipment they will use.

They will help you 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.

They will adjust the enema bag 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 the care team takes all the X-rays.** Once all the X-rays are taken, the test is done. At that time, you may use the bathroom.

After the test

You may go back to your normal activities and diet after the test. Drink an extra 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, contact your physician.

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