



Royal Berkshire
NHS Foundation Trust

24 hour pH study

A guide for parents and carers

GI Physiology Practitioners 0118 322 7725

Your child has been referred for an investigation known as a 24 hour pH study. This leaflet explains what happens during the test and how to prepare for it.

What is a 24 hour pH test?

The test is designed to measure the amount of acid that refluxes from the stomach into the oesophagus over a 24 hour period. We usually ask you to attend Kempton Ward - the paediatric day bed unit, so we can pass a very fine acid-measuring catheter into the oesophagus. For the remainder of the 24 hours of monitoring you will be allowed to go home.

Why does my child need this test?

It will help decide if your child's symptoms are caused by acid reflux.

What are the symptoms of gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GORD)?

Symptoms/signs of GORD vary but include the following: vomiting; regurgitation; failure to thrive; breathing difficulties including stopping breathing; coughing and seizure-like episodes. In some children there are no obvious symptoms. The pH test is also required before certain surgical procedures, such as the insertion of a PEG feeding tube, in which case your child may not have any symptoms/signs of GORD.

Preparing for the test

Your child should have stopped all anti-reflux medication e.g. Ranitidine (Zantac), Omeprazole (Losec), Zoton (Lansoprazole), one week prior to the test. Some antacids e.g. Gaviscon may be continued up to 24 hours before the test.

Your child should have nothing to eat or drink for 3-4 hours before the investigation is due to start.

What happens during the test

The GI Physiology Practitioners will explain the procedure to you and ask you to sign a consent form. This is to ensure that you understand the tests and its implications. The risks are minimal and can include gagging or retching with the insertion of the catheter, a runny nose, sneezing, nasal discomfort and a sore throat. An x-ray will be performed to make sure the pH probe is placed accurately. There is a small radiation dose with the x-ray required to check the catheter position. The nurse/practitioner will also ask you a series of questions about your child's symptoms and the medication that has been prescribed to relieve them. This will help with the interpretation of the tests. Please bring a list of medication with you.

We will measure your child to obtain an accurate height reading, as this measurement is used to position the catheter.

A fine acid-measuring catheter will be passed into your child's oesophagus through their nose. This may be slightly uncomfortable for a short period of time. The catheter will be securely taped to the cheek and behind the ear. The catheter will remain in place for 24 hours and is attached to a small recording machine, which is worn on a belt around your child's waist.

After the catheter has been put in, we will take a chest x-ray to ensure it is in the right position. Often a small adjustment (1-2 cm) to the position of the catheter is necessary. The recording will then start.

After the catheter is placed

In most cases you will be able to go home with your child for the 24 hour monitoring period. However, in some cases it may be necessary for your child to stay in hospital overnight. It is important that your child continues with his/her normal routine in order to record a typical day. You will be asked to complete a diary during the period of the test to record meals and symptoms. This will be explained to you in detail.

- Your child may eat and drink as normal. It is normal for the catheter to move slightly with swallowing.
- All symptoms must be recorded by pressing the button and recording in the diary.
- After 24 hours the machine will stop recording and the catheter needs to be removed. Removing the catheter is a very simple procedure and only takes a few seconds. Parents often choose to remove the catheter themselves and then return the recorder either by hand or registered post. Alternatively arrangements can be made for you to return to the hospital and a nurse will remove it.

Results

The information on the recorder is downloaded onto a computer and the results analysed by an expert. The report will be sent to your consultant who will discuss the results with you when you come to the clinic.

Who to contact if you have a problem

Contact the GI Physiology Practitioners on: 0118 322 7725 but if you need urgent medical advice, please call your own GP or ring NHS 111 service.

For more information about the Trust, visit our website
www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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