

- Please brush your teeth on the day of the test. Do not use alcohol-based mouthwash
- Laxatives, in particular lactulose, should be discontinued at least three days prior to the start of the test.

### Please inform a member of staff if you have:

- Taken antibiotics within the last 4 weeks.
- Had a colonoscopy within the last 4 weeks.
- You are diabetic.

### What happens after the test?

The results will be sent back to the doctor that referred you. You can resume your normal activities and your normal diet.

### Additional information

There are barriers to the multi-storey car park, so you will need to take a ticket to enter it. Before you return to your vehicle (at the end of your stay) please pay the amount due at a pay station (these are located on levels 0 and 2). This will validate your ticket and allow you to exit the car park.

We are happy to answer any questions you may have regarding this appointment. For further information about your procedure, please call the following number:

**GI Physiology Department on  
0118 322 7725 (office hours)**

Visit our website  
[www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

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

GI Physiology, February 2019  
Review due: February 2021

# Hydrogen breath test

Information for  
adult patients

GI Physiology Practitioners  
0118 322 7725

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This leaflet explains what a hydrogen breath test involves and how to prepare for it. If there is anything you do not understand, please ask a member of the GI Physiology team.

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### What is a hydrogen breath test?

The hydrogen breath test is a non-invasive, safe, painless and simple way to diagnose conditions that cause gastrointestinal symptoms. The two most common conditions are:

1. Lactose intolerance: Lactose is the sugar found in milk and individuals who are unable to properly digest lactose are referred to as lactose intolerant.
2. Small bowel bacterial overgrowth: This is a condition where there are greater than normal numbers of colonic bacteria in the small intestine.

Both of these conditions may cause abdominal pain, abdominal bloating and distension, flatulence and diarrhoea.

### How is the test performed?

The test involves blowing into a small hand-held hydrogen monitor through a small tube.

After a first sample has been taken, you will be asked to drink a sugary solution. Further breath samples will then be collected in the same way as the first one. Samples will be taken every 15 minutes for the first 90 minutes and then every 30 minutes for the remaining time. The test will last between three and four hours.

During the test you should not eat, drink, smoke tobacco products or e-cigarettes, sleep or exercise. You may like to bring a book or magazine with you.

The hydrogen monitor is very sensitive to alcohol vapours. On arrival and throughout the test, you may wash your hands with soap and water but **do not use the hospital gel which contains alcohol.**

### How do I prepare for the test?

- Do not have anything to eat for **14 hours before the test.** During this time, sips of water only.
- Do not consume alcohol 12 hours prior to test or use alcohol-based mouthwash.
- On the day prior to the test avoid milk and products such as onions, leeks, garlic, cabbage, beans or any pickled vegetables.
- The last meal on the day before the test should not be large and should ideally not contain any dietary fibre, e.g. bran, wholewheat bread or beans.
- Examples of suitable meals include scrambled eggs on toast, plain rice and chicken or pasta.
- Stop smoking and chewing gum 12 hours before the start of the test.
- Medicines (apart from vitamins, laxatives, motility-enhancing drugs) can be taken with pure water on the day of the test. Laxatives and motility enhancing drugs should be stopped ideally one week prior to test. Multivitamins should stop the day before.