



Small Bowel Follow Through Radiography

About your procedure

Small bowel follow through (SBFT) is an X-ray exam of the small intestine to the large intestines. Read this handout to learn about how the exam works, how it is done, how to prepare for it, what to expect during the exam, and how to get your results.

What is small bowel follow through radiography?

A *small bowel follow through* (SBFT) is an X-ray exam of the small and large intestines. A contrast material called *barium* is used to make the intestines show up clearly on film.

How does the exam work?

The radiologist watches the flow of barium into your *gastrointestinal* (GI) tract using a *fluoroscope*, a device that projects pictures in a movie-like sequence onto a screen. Still images are then taken.

How should I prepare for the exam?

- Your doctor will give you detailed instructions on how to prepare for your exam.
- Eat your regular diet the evening before your exam.
- You will likely be asked not to eat or drink anything (including medicine, especially antacids) after midnight on the morning of the exam. The pictures can be affected if your stomach is not empty.
- It is OK to take your essential prescribed oral medicines with small sips of water.
- Do not chew gum or smoke after midnight.
- Before the exam begins, you will need to remove all jewelry and change into a gown.

Questions?

Call 206-598-6200

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. Clinic staff are also available to help.

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How is the exam done?

It is usually scheduled in the morning to reduce the amount of time you have to fast. The exam can take from 1 to 5 hours, depending on how quickly the barium moves through your body.

1. A radiology technologist will place you on a table next to the X-ray camera.
2. You will drink 2 bottles of liquid barium, which looks like a light-colored milkshake.
3. Once you have swallowed all the barium, a still picture will be taken.

What will I feel during the exam?

- The liquid barium has a chalky taste that can be masked by added flavors such as strawberry, cherry, or vanilla. After you drink the 2 bottles of barium, you will feel full.
- You will be lying down as the radiologist takes pictures of your small bowel. You will be asked to hold your breath to prevent blurring of the still pictures.
- During your exam, you will be asked to turn from side to side, and to hold several different positions. At times, pressure may be applied to your abdomen.
- After your exam, you will be asked to wait. The radiologist will check the pictures for quality. More pictures will be taken as needed. If the X-rays are clear, you may dress and go home.
- You may return to your normal diet and lifestyle right after your exam.
- Your stools may appear gray or white for 48 to 72 hours after the exam, as your body clears the barium from your system. You should drink extra water for 24 hours after the exam.
- You may have trouble moving your bowels. If you do not have a bowel movement for more than 2 days after your exam, or are unable to pass gas, call your doctor promptly.

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

A radiologist trained to interpret SBFT exams will review the exam and send a report to your doctor, who will give you your test results. Based on the findings, you and your primary care doctor will decide the next step, such as treatment for a problem, if needed.