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Hydrogen Breath Test Patient Information Sheet

You have been scheduled for a gastrointestinal diagnostic physiology test called a lactose hydrogen breath test.

Why am I having this test?

Your doctor has arranged this test to evaluate for digestive disorders to see if they can help narrow down what may be causing the digestive issues such as, Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth and/or common food intolerances.

What occurs during the examination?

You will be asked to report to the office after fasting for 12 hours. You will blow into an instrument and your breath will be analyzed for hydrogen gas. Then, you will consume a drink containing the sugar that could be causing your digestive issues. You will then blow into the instrument at certain intervals for up to three hours. You may bring some reading or craft material with you to occupy your time

Are there any complications?

If you have the maldigestion condition, your symptoms may be reproduced.

After the procedure:

Some of your usual gas, bloating or abdominal discomfort may occur.

Preparation for the test:

For four weeks before your test:

- You should not take any antibiotics.

For one week before your test:

- Do not take any laxatives or stool softeners or stool bulking agents.
- You should also not undergo any test that requires cleansing of the bowel, such as colonoscopy or barium enema.

The day before your test:

- You may consume only the following foods and drinks: plain white bread, plain white rice, plain white potatoes, baked or broiled chicken or fish, water, eggs and non-flavored black coffee or tea.
- Only salt may be used to flavor your food. Butter and margarine are not permitted.
- Soda/cola drinks are not permitted.
- Do not eat or drink anything else – it could give false results for the test.
- Specifically, avoid beans, pasta, fiber cereals, and high fiber foods.
- The night before the test, have an early dinner of rice and meat.

For 12 hours before your test:

- You must stop eating and drinking 12 hours before the test.
- You may continue to take your usual prescription medicines with water until 12 hours before the test.
- Please bring all prescription medications to your appointment.

The day of your test:

- You should not eat or drink anything in the morning.
- You may take your medications with a small amount of water. If you are diabetic requiring insulin or diabetic pills, ask your physician if you should change your morning dose. Generally, half of your normal long-acting insulin is given. Oral hypoglycemic medications are usually not taken that morning until completion of the test and resumption of eating meals.
- Two hours before the test, brush your teeth.
- Do not eat, drink, chew gum or tobacco, smoke cigarettes, or eat breath mints or candy before or during the test.
- Do not sleep or exercise while the test is being done.

Your test may last for two to four hours. Please allow yourself sufficient time to complete your test.

These guidelines are from various hospital organizations and studies. Medical professionals have ultimate authority as to how they choose to prepare their patient for the breath test in accordance with their own guidelines and training.