

## Upper Gastrointestinal (GI) Tract X-ray (Radiography)

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### What is Upper Gastrointestinal (GI) Tract Radiography?

Upper gastrointestinal tract radiography, also called an upper GI, is an x-ray examination of the pharynx, esophagus, stomach and first part of the small intestine (also known as the duodenum) that uses a special form of x-ray called fluoroscopy and an orally ingested contrast material called barium.

An x-ray (radiograph) is a noninvasive medical test that helps physicians diagnose and treat medical conditions. Imaging with x-rays involves exposing a part of the body to a small dose of ionizing radiation to produce pictures of the inside of the body. X-rays are the oldest and most frequently used form of medical imaging.

Fluoroscopy makes it possible to see internal organs in motion. When the upper GI tract is coated with barium, the radiologist is able to view and assess the anatomy and function of the esophagus, stomach and duodenum.

An x-ray examination that evaluates only the pharynx and esophagus is called a barium swallow.

In addition to drinking barium, some patients are also given baking-soda crystals (similar to Alka-Seltzer) to further improve the images. This procedure is called an air-contrast or double-contrast upper GI.

### ***How should I prepare?***

To ensure the best possible image quality, your stomach must be empty of food. Therefore, **you should not to eat or drink anything (including any medications taken by mouth, especially antacids) and to refrain from chewing gum and smoking after midnight on the day of the examination.**

You should inform your physician of any medications you are taking and if you have any allergies, especially to barium contrast materials. Also inform your doctor about recent illnesses or other medical conditions.

Women should always inform their physician or x-ray technologist if there is any possibility that they are pregnant.

You may be asked to remove some or all of your clothes and to wear a gown during the exam. You may also be asked to remove jewelry, eye glasses and any metal objects or clothing that might interfere with the x-ray images.