

Hydrogen breath test

Patient information

ALLERGOLOGY

Soon, a hydrogen breath test will be conducted to investigate the symptoms you are experiencing. This brochure explains how this test is performed.

For a complete and up-to-date overview of our healthcare service, please refer to www.dcklinieken.nl.

Why a hydrogen breath test?

By conducting a hydrogen breath test, we can determine whether you have a deficiency in the enzyme lactase. This enzyme aids in breaking down milk sugar (lactose) in the intestines. Lactase is produced by specific cells in the small intestine. When there is a lack of lactase, the breakdown of lactose does not occur adequately in the small intestine. As a result, lactose reaches the large intestine, where it is converted into several substances, including hydrogen gas (H₂), by intestinal bacteria. The hydrogen gas is then absorbed in the large intestine, enters the bloodstream, and is exhaled through the lungs.

How can you prepare for the hydrogen breath test?

The hydrogen breath test can proceed only if you prepare properly, which involves the following:

1) Medicine use

You can use antibiotics until 4 weeks prior to the test. Afterward, they are not allowed. If you are taking antibiotics, consult your doctor to determine whether the hydrogen breath test should be conducted shortly or if it can be postponed until after the antibiotic treatment. You can take laxatives up to a maximum of 3 days prior to the test. Afterward, they are not allowed. If you have diabetes mellitus and use insulin, it is advisable to consult your doctor before the examination. That is because you need to be fasting for several hours. We recommend bringing insulin, your insulin pen, and the blood glucose meter to the test. You can continue taking all other medications as usual.

2) Colonoscopies

You should not undergo a colonoscopy in the two weeks leading up to the test because it temporarily disrupts the intestinal flora.

3) Diet

Starting from two days prior to the test, you may not eat the following foods and drinks:

- peas, beans, capuchins, lentils, and other legumes;
- all types of cabbage (including Brussels sprouts, sauerkraut, and cauliflower);
- onions, leeks, paprikas, asparagus, garlic, bean sprouts, mushrooms;
- foods with very high fiber content, such as grains, bran (e.g., muesli), wholegrain brown bread, nuts, corn, and popcorn;
- all dairy products, buttermilk, yogurt, (sour) cream, cheese, and ice cream.

Legumes and cabbage varieties produce a significant amount of hydrogen during digestion, which can affect the test results.

On the evening before the test, you should have a light, easily digestible meal (no later than 7 PM), such as white bread, white rice, chicken, eggs, fish fillet, or lean cold cuts.

4) Sober on the day of the examination

You need to be fasting before the test. This means you cannot eat anything from 7:00 PM the evening before the examination. After midnight, you can no longer drink alcohol or smoke. Additionally, you cannot chew gum anymore. On the morning of the examination, you can only drink a small amount of water. You cannot use toothpaste on the evening before and the morning of the examination. If you wear dentures, clean them with only toothpaste and water 24 hours before the examination. After that, clean them only with water.

The hydrogen breath test

Please arrive at least 10 minutes before the scheduled time. If you are unable to attend, please contact us by phone at least 48 hours before the appointment at +31 (0) 800 0100 900. Bring identification with you for every visit, even if it is not your first time. If your medication or diet has changed since your last visit to DC Klinieken, please contact us.

You will begin the test by blowing into a mouthpiece. This is the fasting measurement. If this goes well, you will be asked to drink two cups of lactose dissolved in water, the test drink. We then conduct six measurements, each half an hour apart. In principle, the examination takes about 3 hours. At each measurement, you will be asked to blow into the mouthpiece. During the examination, you might experience diarrhea or mild abdominal cramps; these symptoms will subside during the day. We will ask about any (abdominal) complaints at each measurement. Please also inform the medical assistant conducting the test of any symptoms. Of course, restrooms are always available.

The values displayed by the measuring device may rise and then fall after a while. If the values continue to rise, the examination may take longer, up to a maximum of 4 hours. If the values decrease and you have fewer or no symptoms, you may be able to go home earlier.

During the test, you cannot eat, drink, or smoke. Additionally, refrain from engaging in strenuous activities. We recommend bringing something to read to pass the time between measurements pleasantly.

After the hydrogen breath test

After the examination, you can resume normal eating and drinking. You can go home by yourself. You will receive the results of the examination from the doctor who requested the test.

Insurance coverage

DC Klinieken has contracts with all health insurers. This means that almost all healthcare costs are covered, similar to the hospital. However, you will need a referral from your general practitioner. Please be aware of your insurance excess. For more information about reimbursement and possible exceptions, please visit: www.dcklinieken.nl/vergoedingen.

Questions

For more information and answers to frequently asked questions, please visit: www.dcklinieken.nl/contact or contact our Service and Information Centre at +31 (0) 88 0100 900.

Emergency after visiting DC Klinieken

In case of emergency, call: +31 (0) 88 0100 998.

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