

## **Hydrogen Breath Test**

Lactose is a type of sugar found in milk and other dairy products. Lactose intolerance occurs due to the body's inability to digest lactose due to lack of lactase, an enzyme normally produced by the small intestine that is needed to digest lactose. The hydrogen breath test is used to diagnose lactose intolerance or determine if abnormal bacteria is present in the colon.

### **What to expect during the test?**

The test generally lasts 2 hours. During the hydrogen breath test a patient is asked to drink a lactose-containing beverage. The beverage may cause cramping, bloating, gas, or diarrhea.

Fifteen minutes after drinking the beverage, the patient is instructed to blow up balloon-like bags every 15 minutes for two hours. The air in these bags is then tested frequently for the presence of hydrogen.

Normally, very little is detected in breath. However, hydrogen and other gases are produced when undigested lactose in the colon is fermented by bacteria. Raised hydrogen breath levels indicate the improper digestion of lactose, which could lead to a diagnosis of lactose intolerance or the presence of abnormal bacteria in the colon

### **How to prepare for the Hydrogen Breath Test?**

Tell your doctor before the test if:

- You had a colonoscopy. If you just had a colonoscopy, your doctor will ask you to wait a few weeks before the breath test can be performed.
- You are pregnant, have a lung or heart condition, have any diseases, or
- You are allergic to any medications.

### **Important Guidelines for the Hydrogen Breath Test**

- Do not eat or drink anything (including water) for at least 8 hours before the hydrogen breath test. If you need to take medicine, take them only with a small sip of water 8 hours before the procedure.
- Do not take any antibiotics for 2-4 weeks before the test. Take only the medications approved by your doctor before the procedure. Do not discontinue any medication without first consulting with your primary or referring doctor.
- Do not chew gum on the day of the test.
- Any other recommendations from your doctor.

### **What to expect after the Hydrogen Breath Test?**

The patient may resume your normal activities and diet after a hydrogen breath test. consult with your doctor if you have any questions and concerns.