Gastric Emptying Scan

What is a Gastric Emptying Scan?
A Gastric Emptying Scan is a nuclear medicine test that determines how fast the stomach empties food into the small intestine after eating. After ingestion of a specialized meal containing small amounts of radioactive material, images are obtained using a gamma camera that will detect the distribution of the radioactive energy in the body, thus recording the emptying progression as the food leaves the stomach. The radiation exposure from this exam is no more than from a routine X-ray procedure.

CPT Code
78264 Gastric Emptying solid/liquid

Indications
A gastric emptying scan is used to identify any upper gastric motility problems, gastroduodenal disease, dumping syndrome, and causes for vomiting.

Contraindications
Allergy to eggs, baby food, oatmeal, sweet potatoes and gluten.

How Does The Patient Prepare?
The patient should not eat or drink anything for six (6) hours prior to the exam. No smoking for three (3) hours prior to exam. For the patient’s comfort, the bladder should be emptied prior to beginning the exam.

What Happens During the Test?
The patient will be asked to eat a radionuclide egg sandwich and drink some water. Next, the technologist will position the patient under the gamma camera, which will obtain a series of pictures over time to record the emptying process. It will take 10 - 15 minutes to prepare for the exam once the patient arrives. It will then take about 1-1/2 hours to complete the exam; shorter or longer, depending on how quickly the food leaves the stomach. The patient will not feel any effects from swallowing the radionuclide.

After the Test
Unless instructed otherwise by the physician or technologist, the patient may resume normal diet and activities after the exam.

The Results
A radiologist will analyze the images and send a signed report to the referring physician within one business day.

Information adapted from www.snm.org and Dr. Jay Marks

This information is intended for use as merely a guideline for referring physicians and their staff members only. It contains information pertaining to the most commonly ordered exams and indications. However, Shawnee Mission Medical Center Radiology does not recommend any particular examination.
Individual radiologist preference or patient circumstances may dictate ordering alternative studies. Although contrast codes are not needed to place an order, the following contrast codes may be used in placing orders:
CT Contrast Q9967, MRI contrast A9577 and A9579.