Lactose Tolerance – Hydrogen Breath Test

Why am I having this test?

- A normal sample of your breath contains Hydrogen, Methane, and Carbon Dioxide.
- Measuring any change in the amount of hydrogen and methane in your breath samples after you are given a lactose drink can tell your doctor if your body is unable to break down lactose in your food.

What will happen during the test?

- You will be asked to rinse your mouth with mouthwash.
- You will then be asked to blow through a mouthpiece into a small foil bag to collect a sample of your breath.
- You will be given a 25gm dose of lactose diluted in water, and then more breath samples will be collected over a period of 3 hours.
- During the test it will be necessary for you to stay awake. The hydrogen and methane levels in your breath samples will change if you fall asleep.

NOTE:
If you have diabetes, discuss with your doctor whether you should adjust your morning medication, as you will be fasting for up to 11 hours.

2 days before the test

- Stop taking all antibiotics. Stop medications such as Lactulose, Imodium, Lomotil, Questran, Domperidone (Motilium), Metamucil, Prodiem, Senokot.
- Follow a diet that avoids all foods containing lactose. Refer to the list on the next page to know which foods to avoid, and which foods you are allowed to eat.

8 hours before the test

- Stop taking all medications.
- Do not have anything more to eat.
- May drink water ONLY.

On the day of your test

- If you wish to brush you teeth before the appointment, you may do so, but do not swallow any fluid.
- Do not smoke for at least 1 hour before the appointment.
- The test will take 3 hours to complete.
- You must not eat or smoke during the collection of the breath samples. Water ONLY may be consumed.
- After the test is completed, you may start taking your medications again, and may eat and drink normally after you leave.
Possible side effects

After swallowing the lactose drink, you might experience some gas buildup in your stomach, or some bloating. This should not last long. It could also trigger diarrhea.

After the test

Contact your doctor’s office and book a follow-up appointment to discuss the test results.

Restricted Lactose Diet (Follow for 2 days before your test)

This list is not exclusive. You should read labels to ensure products you are using do not contain lactose.

Foods to Avoid

- Milk, cheese, curd, ice cream, ice milk, yoghurt, yoghurt drinks, goat milk products, cream, sour cream, buttermilk
- Cream soup and cheese sauces
- Processed meats
- Sugar substitutes – Sweet’n’Low, Equal
- Chocolate / Caramels
- Butter, margarine containing lactose
- Fast Food French fries
- High fibre foods – beans, bran, cereal, multigrain/Flax bread, bagels, waffles, crepes, pancakes (as they take longer to digest)

Foods you Can Eat

- Commercially available Lactose-reduced milk (Lactaid, Lacteese, Rice Milk, DariFree)
- Cream Substitutes (Coffee Mate, Coffee Rich)
- Lactose Free margarine (check product label)
- Fish / Beef / Poultry / Pork
- Eggs
- All Fruits / Vegetables
- Regular pasta
- All soy products
- White bread

Where do I go for this test?

This procedure is performed in the Gastroenterology (GI) Function Unit, 4th Floor, Room 473, Hotel Dieu Hospital. Please report to the Jeanne Mance 4 Registration Desk.

If you have any problems or questions, phone the GI Function Testing Unit at 613-544-3400 ext 2417:

- Monday & Friday 8:00am to 12:00pm
- Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 8:00am to 2:00pm

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