

Gastric Emptying Breath Test

What is it and why do I need it?

Gastric Emptying Breath Test (GEBT) is a non-invasive test that helps determine whether you have gastroparesis, a condition where the stomach does not empty its content properly into the small intestine. It is done in our office, over the course of five hours. The test measures how quickly and efficiently a meal empties from your stomach. If you are experiencing nausea, vomiting, or an early fullness after eating, your physician may want to order this test to determine if you may have gastroparesis.

The risks

The GEBT is a non-invasive, non-radioactive, FDA-approved test that takes 5 hours to complete. You will not be able to proceed with this test if you are allergic to spirulina, eggs, wheat, or milk.

The preparation

You will be asked to **NOT eat or drink anything 8 hours before your appointment time**, this includes water. If you need to take any morning medication, you can do so with 4oz of water up to one hour before the test. You may also be asked to stop certain medications that affect gastric emptying **3 days before your test**. Please let us know if you have diabetes. We will need your glucose reading the morning of your test (you can check it at home and bring your reading to the office—you cannot do the GEBT if your glucose level is above 275mg/dl that morning). You should not take another carbon-13-based breath test for 24hrs before your GEBT test. You will need to be tested for COVID-19 72 hours before your GEBT (regardless of your vaccination status). We will provide you with information on how to do this. You may want to bring a book, laptop, or tablet to enjoy during the testing duration.

The test

You will need to consume a special meal in our office. The meal contains spirulina (a plant-based product) that has been modified to contain a special type of carbon molecule called carbon-13. Carbon-13 is a completely safe form of the element carbon. As you eat the meal, the spirulina is metabolized and carbon-13 becomes present in your exhaled breath. Our staff will be collecting samples of your breath before and several times after the meal to determine the amount of carbon-13 you are exhaling over a period of time. These samples will then be analyzed and used to determine how well your stomach is emptying.

After the test

After the test, you will be able to leave our office without any restrictions. The breath samples will be mailed to the Cairn Diagnostics laboratory for analysis. The result will then be sent to our office and your ordering doctor will read the report. You should receive a letter with the findings within 7-10 days after your test date.