Urea Breath Test (H. pylori Testing) Instructions

Please read this handout. If you have any questions, ask your nurse or doctor before coming to the lab. It is very important to follow these instructions to obtain the best test results.

Why am I having this test?

The Urea Breath Test will help your doctor decide if you have gastritis (irritation in the lining of the stomach) or an ulcer (sore) caused by bacteria called *Helicobacter pylori*. The test may also be used to follow up on your response to treatment.

How do I get ready for this test?

- Do not eat for one hour before your test.
- Stop smoking at least one hour before and during your test.
- Certain drugs and over-the-counter preparations interfere with this test. You must be off these medicines for two weeks before this test can be done. Contact your doctor for instructions if you have taken any of the drugs listed below during the two weeks before your test.
  - Bismuth preparations such as Pepto-Bismol®, Kaopectate®, or Helidac®.
  - Testing can be performed while on proton pump inhibitors such as Prilosec®, Prevacid®, Nexium®, Protonix®, Aciphex®, Zegerid®. If you are taking proton pump inhibitors a positive test is considered positive; however a negative test may be false. Your doctor may ask you to come back for a repeat test after discontinuing proton pump inhibitors for two weeks.
  - H₂ Blockers (most commonly used; list is not all inclusive) such as Zantac®, Ranitidine®, Pepcid®, Famotidine®, Cimetidine®, Tagamet®, Axid® may reduce test reliability and may be discontinued for 24-48 hours before testing.
  - If you have phenylketonuria (PKU) please contact your doctor. This test cannot be done on persons with PKU.
  - To find out if the treatment has worked, you must wait at least 4 weeks after the end of treatment to avoid false negative results.
Are there drugs I am allowed to use before *H. pylori* testing?

- Topical antibiotics
- Antacids (most commonly used; list is not all inclusive) such as Gaviscon®, Maalox®, Mylanta®, Rolaids®, Tums®, Milk of Magnesia®, Gelusil®, Alka Seltzer®, Alka-2®, Titralac®, Amphojel®, Alternagel®

How does the test work?

1. You will be asked to blow into a small collection bag. This is your baseline breath sample.
2. A substance called urea will be dissolved in water. You will drink this water.
3. Fifteen minutes later you will be asked to blow into a second collection bag.
4. The breath samples obtained are tested in the lab.
5. The lab test will find out if *H. pylori* is present.

The staff from the Phlebotomy Lab will give you the drink. They will help you collect the breath samples. If you have questions about this test, feel free to contact Phlebotomy at (608) 263-6033 between the hours of 8:00 am and 4:30 pm, Monday – Friday.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person’s health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright ©10/2016. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#6901.