

What is a Breath Test for SIBO?

OVERVIEW

Hydrogen breath tests are recommended by gastroenterologists for certain gastrointestinal conditions that affect your digestive health.

One of these conditions, known as small intestinal bacterial overgrowth or SIBO, most commonly results in:

- Bloating
- Flatulence
- Abdominal discomfort
- Watery diarrhea



SIBO can seriously affect your overall quality of life, which is why it's recommended to schedule an appointment with a board-certified gastroenterologist as soon as you begin to experience symptoms.

Caused due to an overgrowth of bacteria in the small intestine, SIBO results in an imbalance in gut health, resulting in changes to your body's ability to properly digest food.

A hydrogen breath test can accurately diagnose and help your doctor develop a treatment plan for you.

How does a Breath Test for SIBO Work?

Some patients with SIBO may not experience any symptoms despite having an overgrowth of bacteria in their gut. Others, however, experience uncomfortable symptoms that affect digestion and your overall well-being.

Not only are hydrogen breath tests non-invasive, but they are simple tests to accurately diagnose SIBO in patients.

Your doctor may have you avoid certain medications (such as antibiotics and laxatives) leading up to the test. You will need to also avoid certain foods including complex carbohydrates (bread, pasta, fiber). You will fast for 8-12 hours prior to your test. On the day of your test, you will be asked to not smoke or exercise.

A sample of your breath is collected at the beginning of the test. Then, you'll be given a solution rich in sugar (lactulose or glucose) to drink before your breath sample will be collected again multiple times over a period of three hours.

During the test, you will not be able to eat, drink, smoke, sleep, or exercise.

Test results evaluate the presence of hydrogen gas (and sometimes methane) in your breath—a large amount of hydrogen or methane gas indicates that there is excess bacteria in the small intestine, causing an overgrowth or SIBO.

A Breath Test for SIBO is Safe When Performed by a Board-Certified Gastroenterologist

Once SIBO is diagnosed, your doctor can help develop a treatment plan that results in the reduction of excessive bacteria in your small intestine.

Treatment to get your gut properly functioning can include:

- Antibiotics
- Supplements such as vitamin B12, iron, thiamine, and niacin
- Dietary changes