What is Capsule Endoscopy?

Capsule Endoscopy is a procedure that allows the doctor to examine the small intestine by using a tiny “pill sized” video camera inside a capsule that is swallowed. It is the size of a large vitamin pill.

As the capsule moves through the digestive tract (8-12 hours), the camera takes tens of thousands of pictures that are recorded on a sensor belt that is worn by the patient.

When the procedure ends, the images are downloaded to a computer for examination by the doctor. The capsule itself is passed in the stool.

Why is Capsule Endoscopy Recommended for My Child?

Your doctor will consider doing this simple test to look for bleeding or other conditions occurring in a part of the small intestine that cannot be investigated with a standard endoscope.

It may also be used to detect a range of conditions including:

- Crohn’s Disease
- tumors
- polyps,
- ulcers
- Celiac Disease

Can Everyone do this Test?

The test can be done even on young children depending on their age and size. Sometimes, the capsule may be too big for a small child to swallow and your doctor may place it with an endoscope.

Are There any Other Exceptions?

If there is concern that a part of your child’s small intestine is narrowed or obstructed in any way, your doctor may decide to test the openness of the intestine with a dissolvable capsule before initiating the procedure. If the dissolvable capsule sticks as noted in an x-ray the procedure will not be done.

If your child has a heart pacemaker, a capsule endoscopy should not be done.

How Should You Prepare Your Child for the Procedure?

Your doctor may ask your child to have light meals or clear liquids the day before. Your child may be asked to use a laxative the day before the procedure. Occasionally you will be asked not to give certain types of medications to your child the day of the test.
What Can You and Your Child Expect During the Procedure?

Your child will be asked to wear a sensor belt around his or her waist.

Your child will swallow a capsule the size of a large vitamin pill with a glass of water. Your child will not feel anything.

Once the capsule is ingested your child will be able to resume normal activities although vigorous activity is to be avoided. After 8 – 12 hours your child will return to have the sensor belt removed.

What Happens After the Capsule Endoscopy?

Your child will be able to eat within a few hours of ingesting the capsule based on the doctor’s recommendation. The capsule itself will be passed in the stool.

The doctor will give you an estimate of how long it will take to get the results back.

Are There any Risks to Doing the Procedure?

If there is an unusually narrowed part of the intestine, rarely the capsule may become stuck and sometimes surgery may be needed to remove it.

IMPORTANT REMINDER: This information from the North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition (NASPGHAN) is intended only to provide general information and not as a definitive basis for diagnosis or treatment in any particular case. It is very important that you consult your doctor about your specific condition.

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