

Capsule Endoscopy

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 the camera takes thousands of pictures that are recorded on a sensor belt that is worn by the patient. When the procedure ends, the doctor downloads the images to a computer for examination. 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 assist in the diagnosis of conditions including:

- ❖ Crohn’s Disease
- ❖ Tumors
- ❖ Celiac Disease
- ❖ Polyps
- ❖ Ulcers

The doctor may also use capsule endoscopy to monitor the progress of a treatment plan for Crohn’s 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 in the small intestine with an endoscope.

Are there any other exceptions?

If there is concern that a part of the small intestine is narrowed or obstructed in any way, there are tests to ensure the intestine is open enough to be safe for the capsule to pass. If your child has a heart pacemaker, a capsule endoscopy should not be done.

How to prepare for the procedure

Your doctor may ask your child to have light meals or clear liquids one day prior. A laxative the day before the procedure may also be needed. Occasionally certain types of medications must be avoided the day of the test.

What can you expect during the procedure?

A comfortable sensor belt will be worn around the waist and under clothing. The recorder, a small portable recording device that communicates with the capsule, is attached to the sensor belt. Your child will be able to return to a regular routine that day such as go to school but will need to abstain from sports or physical education class during the capsule endoscopy study. Eating is usually permitted within a few hours of ingesting the capsule.

You will be asked to return 8 – 12 hours later to have the sensor belt and recorder removed.

What happens after the capsule endoscopy?

The capsule will be passed in the stool and can be discarded.

The doctor provides 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 the capsule may become lodged and might require surgery to remove it. This is a rare complication, estimated at about 1 in 1000 tests.