



Education

Oral Cholecystogram

What is an oral cholecystogram?

An oral cholecystogram is an x-ray procedure used to look for gallstones in the gallbladder or bile duct.

When is it used?

Located underneath the liver on your right side, the gallbladder is shaped like a balloon and holds bile that drains from the liver. Bile, which helps to digest fat, can create a sediment that forms gallstones. These stones can remain loose in the gallbladder, block the gallbladder, get stuck in the narrow common bile duct (the tube leading into the small intestine from the liver, pancreas, and the gallbladder), or enter the intestine. When the stones block the neck of the gallbladder, they partly block the flow of bile. When the gallbladder contracts, you may have pain.

This procedure may help your health care provider make a better diagnosis of your problem.

Examples of alternatives include:

- Ultrasound, a technique that produces and receives high-frequency sound waves. After they pass into the tissue, the reflected sound waves make a picture on a video screen and can be photographed for study.
- Other tests, including blood tests. Discuss these possible tests with your health care provider.

How do I prepare for an oral cholecystogram?

Tell your health care provider if you are allergic to contrast dye or seafood. Also, tell your provider if you are or may be pregnant.

Follow your health care provider's instructions. The night before the procedure, eat a light, low-fat meal such as soup and salad. Several hours after the night meal, take the pills your provider provided. Take one pill every 5 minutes until they are gone. The dye in these pills will outline the gallbladder on the x-rays.

Do not eat or drink anything the morning of the procedure.

What happens during the procedure?

A technologist will take several x-rays of your abdomen. The gallbladder and any stones may show up on the x-ray. You may be given something to eat or drink to contract the gallbladder and put dye into the bile ducts and intestine. The technologist may then take more x-rays of your abdomen.

If the gallbladder does not show up on the x-rays, your health care provider may want you to repeat this test the next day.

What happens after the procedure?

The radiologist will send the complete report to your health care provider. You should call your provider's office in a few days to hear the results. Ask your provider how you should take care of yourself and when you should come back for a checkup.

What are the benefits of this procedure?

Your health care provider may know if there are stones in the gallbladder and can decide what treatment to suggest.

What are the risks associated with this procedure?

- You may have an allergic reaction to the dye. In an allergic reaction, your body's immune system misreads a harmless substance as harmful. As a result you can have symptoms that vary widely in severity. For example, you could get hives, nausea, fainting or swelling.
- The test may not work.
- The dye may not pass into the gallbladder.
- The pills may give you diarrhea.

You should ask your health care provider how these risks apply to you.

When should I call my health care provider?

Call your health care provider right away if:

- You have an allergic reaction to the dye.
- You develop a fever.
- You vomit up the pills after you take them.

Call your health care provider during office hours if:

- You have questions about the procedure or its result.
- You want to make another appointment.

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Gallstones

