

Question 7 – Week of December 21

The most direct method for diagnosing bacterial overgrowth is:

- A. Glucose hydrogen breath test
- B. Lactulose hydrogen breath test
- C. ¹⁴C-xylose test
- D. Culture of small bowel aspirate

Answer: D

Small intestinal bacterial overgrowth is confirmed by the demonstration of elevated numbers of small bowel bacteria colonies and the replacement of oropharyngeal flora with predominantly colonic organisms. Culture of small bowel aspirates is, therefore, the most direct method for diagnosing overgrowth. Because small bowel intubation and aspiration for microbial analysis are cumbersome, overgrowth is considered in subjects with predisposing factors and appropriate history. Indirect testing may help to substantiate the diagnosis.

Reference:

1. Riordan SM, McIver CK, Walker BM, et al. The lactulose breath hydrogen test and small intestinal bacterial overgrowth. *Am J Gastroenterol* 1996;91:1795-1803.