**Intestinal biopsy**

An intestinal biopsy determines the enzymatic activity through a tissue sample from the small intestine. It is an invasive test based on a direct method for measuring the disaccharide concentration.

This procedure consists of extracting a sample from the intestinal mucosa to examine the concentration of different disaccharides in general, and lactase in particular (1).

One or several tissue samples are obtained through a probe with a capsule (Crosby or Watson capsule) that functions through a suctioning-sectioning mechanism. An X-ray technique is used (usually computerised tomography or ultrasound) to guide the surgeon to the correct area; or capsule endoscopy, which allows the surgeon to be guided to the correct area with the lowest possible amount of irradiation (2).

The quantity of lactase is measured by lactase units per gram of tissue - protein (lactase U/g). Diverse studies conducted determine a range of 10 to 20U/g as the cut-off point for establishing a hypolactasia diagnosis. Lactase activity that is below this range is considered a positive test indicating hypolactasia. This test requires the patient to remain in fasting conditions from the night before collecting the samples (3,4).

The intestinal biopsy procedure is considered the test of reference in the final diagnosis of hypolactasia. However, the uniform distribution of the intestinal lactase and susceptibility to damage caused by medicines, infections, etc. give rise to the appearance of false positives and negatives (5).

This test is not used often, since it requires an invasive procedure and a specialised laboratory. It is conducted on patients who want a full diagnosis of their intestinal enzyme activity and has mostly been performed on children (5).

5. Alliende FG. Intolerancia a la lactosa y otros disacáridos. Gastr Latinoam 2007; 18(2):152-6