

Barium Enema Preparation

What is a barium enema?

A barium enema is a screening study used to produce a clear xray of the large bowel (also known as the colon) and is used to help in the diagnosis of bowel problems. For this examination to be satisfactory it is very important that you follow the instructions given very carefully.

Why do I need a barium enema?

To help diagnose large bowel problems.

What preparation is required?

Preparation takes 3 days and includes a special low residue diet which must be followed prior to the examination. (Please see Large Bowel Preparation/Diet sheet) Please note, if the bowel is not adequately cleansed the examination may have to be repeated

****Please see Large Bowel preparation/diet sheet****

What documentation is required?

Bring your referral and any relevant previous xrays for comparison. Also bring your Medicare card, pension or healthcare card or Veteran's Affairs card details if applicable.

What you need to tell us prior to your appointment?

At the time of arranging your appointment, please advise us if you have diabetes - we need to know such detail prior to your appointment. You must also advise us if you are being treated for glaucoma or heart failure or have ever had a reaction to the drug Buscopan.

Also, please advise us if you are pregnant.

What will happen during the examination?

Prior to the examination you will be asked to change into a gown, and then directed to lie on an x-ray table. A small, flexible, lubricated tube will be placed into your rectum.

An injection of Buscopan may then be given to relax the colon to reduce discomfort and improve the image quality. This injection may cause temporary blurring of vision, and if this is the case you should not drive a car until your vision has returned to normal. It would be ideal to have someone drive you home.

A white barium mixture and then air is passed into the bowel via this tubing. The air is used to help the barium fluid flow around the bowel. You may feel a "bubbling" sensation and feel "full".

You will be asked to roll into a variety of positions to make sure that your bowel is well coated with the mixture which will assist in getting clear x-ray images. It is important that you try to retain the barium mixture and air until the end of the examination to ensure we get adequate images. You may be asked to hold your breath for several seconds to assist in the securing of clear images.

How long will the examination take?

The whole examination will take approximately 60 minutes however the tubing will be in for a significantly less amount of time in most cases.

What can you expect after your examination?

Once the examination is complete, most of the fluid and air is drained away before the tube is removed. You will be able to go to the toilet before dressing.

There should be no ill effects after the examination although your bowel motions may be white for some days, or cramping discomfort may be experienced for a short period of time. Drink lots of fluids and have a high fibre diet for 2 to 3 days to flush the barium out of your large bowel, otherwise it may cause constipation.

Are there any risks?

You will receive a dose of x-ray radiation. The benefits of detecting disease are believed to outweigh any potential risks from receiving such a dose.

Please, however, advise the radiographer if you are, or think you may be, pregnant.

What happens with the images and report?

After your examination you may be given a copy of the most pertinent images from your study. A report will be provided directly to your referring doctor. We will store digital copies of all studies and reports on our secure patient information system for comparison with any future examinations.

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