

Barium Enema

What is a barium enema?

A barium enema allows the radiologist to view the large bowel (colon) and helps in the diagnosis of bowel problems. It is a very effective way to produce a clear x-ray of the bowel, which is not well defined using plain x-rays.

Preparation

Your doctor will give you a preparation kit or you can collect one from our radiology department. This kit requires you to follow a special diet and take a laxative drink to clear your bowel. You must follow the instructions given to you precisely.

If any of the preparation instructions are unclear, or if you have had previous problems with a similar procedure, please contact the radiology department.

If you have diabetes, you must contact us prior to your appointment.

Please take any normal medication with a sip of water.

Procedure

During the procedure, you will be asked to lie on an x-ray table and a flexible, lubricated tube will be placed into your rectum. This tube will normally stay in place by itself, or a small balloon may be inflated to hold it in place.

A white barium mixture and air is passed into the bowel. You will be asked to roll into a variety of positions to make sure that your bowel is well coated with the mixture.

There may be some discomfort during the procedure but as soon as the x-rays have been taken some of the fluid and air will be drained away. If the procedure proves too uncomfortable, an injection of Buscopan or Glucagon may be administered to relax the bowel. The tube will then be removed and you will be able to go to the toilet.

There should be no ill effects after the examination although your bowel action will be white for some days. Some people feel some cramping discomfort for a short time.

If you are prone to constipation then add 0.5 to 1 litre of fluid (e.g., water, cordial, fruit juice, etc.) and some fruit to your diet during the day after the examination.

The examination can take approximately 40 minutes.

Please bring any previous x-rays with you on the day of your examination