



Patient & Family Education

Barium Enema

A barium enema is a X-ray of the large intestine (colon). This test is used to diagnosis abnormalities in and around the colon.

This test will be done in the radiology department. You will lie on the x-ray table and a preliminary x-ray will be taken. You will then be asked to lie on your side while a well-lubricated enema tube is gently inserted into your rectum. The barium, a radiopaque (shows up on x-ray) contrast medium, is then allowed to flow into the colon. A small balloon at the tip of the enema tube may be inflated to help keep the barium inside. The flow of barium is monitored on a x-ray fluoroscope screen (like a TV monitor). You will be asked to move to different positions and the table may be slightly tipped to get different views. At certain times when the x-ray pictures are taken, you will be asked to hold your breath and be very still.

The enema tube is removed after the pictures are taken and you are given a bedpan or helped to the toilet. You will then expel as much of the barium as possible. One or two x-rays will be taken after the barium is expelled.

Some people will also have a barium with air study done. The colon will be half-filled with barium. Through the same tube, the colon is filled with additional air. The air distends the colon and makes it easier to see.

The procedure will take approximately 45 minutes.

Preparation for Barium Enema

A successful barium enema requires preparation. Pick up a prep kit (Evac-Q-Kwik) in the Radiology department the day before your procedure. For adults, follow the instructions inside the prep kit using either the 12 noon or 6 p.m. starting time.

For pediatric patients (ages 7-18), your physician will prescribe a laxative to take before the procedure. Children ages 0-7 do not routinely have a special pre-procedure preparation. Follow your physician's instructions.

The morning of the test, do not eat or drink anything. You may take your medicines with small sips of water.

How the test will feel

There is a feeling of fullness during the procedure. You may experience some cramping and the urge to use the bathroom. The x-rays themselves are painless.

Care after the barium enema

No recovery time is required; however, it is very important to void and empty the bowel right after the exam to eliminate the barium. **Drink plenty of fluid** to help avoid uncomfortable side effects such as constipation. Avoid carbonated beverages. You will probably experience some degree of bloating and flatulence (gas). Do not be alarmed if you stool is white due to the barium for a day or so after the test.

Results of the procedure will be sent to your physician.

This information is only a summary. It should not be used as a substitute for consultation with your doctor or other health care provider regarding your particular medical condition.