

Procedure Information: Barium Enema

What is a Barium Enema?

A Barium Enema is a radiographic exam in which the colon is filled with barium so the radiologist can view and assess the rectum, colon and sometimes a portion of the small bowel. Barium is entered into your colon by giving the patient an enema and watching the colon fill under fluoroscopy.

When is a Barium Enema ordered?

Barium enemas may be ordered to detect tumors or polyps, cancer or ulcerative colitis (inflammatory bowel disease).

Some symptoms you may be having may also prompt an enema to be ordered by your doctor such as:

Constipation	Suspected blood loss
Diarrhea	Abdominal pain
Blood in stool	Sudden change in bowel habits
Weight loss	Irritable bowl syndrome

Patient Preparation

There is a two day preparation required for this exam. Please follow the preparation below:

The following items need to be purchased from your local pharmacy:

- Two ounces of Caster oil or 10 ounces of Magnesium Citrate
- Two 5mg tablets of Bisacodyl or two 5mg Dulcolax tablets
- Two quart tap water enema bag

TWO DAYS BEFORE THE TEST:

Start a clear liquid diet. Refer to the clear liquid list below:

- Beverages – Clear tea, coffee, soft drink, water, ice
- Fruit Juices - Clear fruit juices (apple or grape) or strained fruit juices
- Desserts – Flavored gelatins
- Soups – Clear broth, bouillon (fat free)
- Sweets – Sugar, honey, Plain hard sugar candy

ONE DAY BEFORE TEST:

Continue the clear liquid diet

Drink ten eight ounce glasses of water throughout the day

Take two ounces of Castor oil (or Magnesium Citrate) at 12 noon

Take two 5mg tablets of Bisacodyl or two 5mg Dulcolax tablets at 4pm

DAY OF TEST:

Do not eat breakfast

Give yourself an enema from the prep kit but not before 6 am (follow the directions on the box)

Report 15 minutes before your scheduled time

What happens during a Barium Enema procedure?

You will be taken to a private changing room to put on a hospital gown. A radiographer will take you to an exam room, verify your identity (name and birth date) and obtain medical history for the radiologist. You will be positioned on the examination table on your back. An image of your abdomen will be taken to make sure your bowel is clean from the prep before proceeding with the exam. The radiologist or radiographer will then insert a small tube into your rectum and begin the procedure of introducing the barium mixture into your colon. Air may also be injected into your colon through the tube to help coat the lining of your colon. Images are taken during the filling of your colon. The doctor and radiographer will ask you to roll from side to side and hold different positions for imaging. Once the exam is completed the tube will be removed and you will be quickly escorted to the restroom in the exam room to expel the residual barium and air. A Barium Enema is usually completed within 60 minutes.

What will I experience during and after the procedure?

The sensation to move your bowels may occur as your bowel fills. You may feel some abdominal cramping or pressure during the exam and even after its completion. Most people tolerate the mild discomfort. If you are having a lot of discomfort, please inform the radiologist or radiographer. Upon completion of the exam, you are asked to drink plenty of fluids to help your body get rid of the barium. You may also take a mild laxative to help rid your body of the barium but only with your doctor's approval. Please return to normal diet unless your doctor tells you otherwise.

What are the risks?

Barium can cause an obstruction in the gastrointestinal tract, called a barium impaction. Consult your doctor if you have concerns following the exam.