



Radiology Services

Barium Enema

Understanding Your Barium Enema Exam

A barium enema has been requested by your doctor to help make a diagnosis of your condition. This exam, performed in the Radiology Department, is an X-ray of the lower digestive tract. Your barium enema will be performed by a radiologist—a doctor who specializes in diagnosing illnesses with X-ray studies—and a radiologic technologist—a specialist in the use of X-ray equipment.

A radiologic technologist will talk with you before your barium enema to make sure you understand the exam and how to prepare for it. This specialist will be glad to answer any questions you may have about your exam. However, this sheet will address common questions people ask.

Important: Before having the exam, tell your doctor or technologist if you are pregnant or think you might be.

How should I prepare for the exam?

- Preparations begin before the exam, and it is important to carefully follow all instructions given to you by your doctor. If you don't, you may have to repeat the exam later.
- You will be instructed to follow a modified diet that includes more liquids and less solid food. In certain situations, a complete liquid diet may be necessary. Your doctor will give you detailed instructions about your diet before the exam.
- You will be asked not to eat or drink anything a certain time before the exam. Your lower digestive tract must be clear for your exam to be successful. Anything remaining in the colon or rectum will show up on X-ray film and could be mistaken for an abnormality.
- Your doctor may recommend a laxative, enema or suppository to help empty your colon.
- If you already are a patient at the hospital, our staff will help you prepare for the exam.
- Whether or not you are staying in the hospital, preparations for the exam will be basically the same.
- Check with your doctor's office about how much time you will need for the exam. Be sure to plan your schedule accordingly, allowing plenty of time for your entire visit.

Before Your Exam

Please arrive 30 minutes before your scheduled time to register. Orders for your exam are needed to perform the procedure—**we cannot proceed without them**. Bring a copy of your insurance card. After you are registered in the business office, you will be directed to the Radiology Department.

What happens during the exam?

- You will be asked to remove your clothing and put on a patient gown.
- When you enter the X-ray room, the radiologist and technologist may ask you a few questions. Tell them at this time if you have had difficulty controlling your bowel.
- You will be carefully positioned on a table behind a piece of equipment called a fluoroscope.
- You will be asked to lie on your side so that a lubricated enema tip can be inserted into your rectum. Liquid barium then will be released into your bowel to allow your colon to be visualized by the radiologist. The barium mixture coats the walls of your colon and rectum, blocking X-rays and casting a shadow that can be visualized on the fluoroscope and recorded on X-ray film.
- While the barium films the colon, you will feel as if you need to move your bowel. This reaction is normal, so the enema tip is specially designed to help you hold in the barium. Let the radiologist or technologist know if you are having problems holding in this tip.
- The radiologist will watch the barium flow into your colon using the fluoroscope. During this time, you may be asked to move from side to side and to hold different positions. Some pressure may be applied to your abdomen and the table tilted slightly.
- The radiologist will take the X-rays of selected areas of your colon. When each X-ray is taken, you will be asked to hold your breath for just a moment and to remain still. You may hear sliding and clicking sounds coming from the film cassette.
- The technologist then will use the same equipment to take an X-ray of your entire colon.

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- You then may go to the bathroom and expel the barium. Afterward, another X-ray will be taken of your empty colon.
- Please relax and wait while the radiologist examines your X-rays to make sure they include all necessary information. Sometimes, more X-rays are needed.

What happens after the exam?

- For the next day or two, your stools may appear slightly whitish from the barium. The radiologist may give you a laxative to help empty the barium from your colon.
- You may go back to your regular diet immediately following the exam, unless told otherwise by your doctor.

How do I get the results?

The radiologist will study the results of your exam and give a report to your personal doctor. Your doctor then will discuss these results with you and make sure you understand what they mean. Sometimes, additional tests or treatment may be recommended.

We hope you are pleased with the care you receive in the Radiology Department. Our goal is to give you the very best care and attention.

*For more information, please call Patient Scheduling at **(864) 455-7774** or visit **ghs.org/radiology**.*