Barium Enema
Radiology Service

Information for patient

What is a Barium Enema?
A barium enema is a procedure performed under x-ray guidance to investigate the large bowel (colon). Barium, a type of fluid that is visible on x-ray images, is introduced into the large bowel via a small tube which is inserted into the rectum.

This procedure is usually performed to assess an obstruction or narrowing in the large bowel, generally in patients who have failed or are not suitable for colonoscopy or CT colonography.

What to Bring:
Bring any relevant imaging scans (film packet or a CD containing X-rays, CT scans, ultrasound or MRIs etc.).

Preparation:
You will be provided with an information sheet containing bowel preparation instructions to empty your bowel for your procedure. It is important to strictly follow the proper bowel preparation as any faeces remaining in the bowel will result in the test being postponed.

Eating/ drinking:
Please strictly follow the bowel preparation information sheet.

Medications:
Please bring a list of all your medications with you to your appointment.

Procedure:
On arrival to the radiology department our staff will discuss with you your medical history and ask you to change into a patient gown.

The doctor will explain the procedure to you and you will have an opportunity to ask any questions you may have.

During the procedure you will be lying on your left side. The doctor will perform a digital rectal examination before placing a small plastic tube into the rectum.

Barium will be introduced into the large bowel via this rectal tube. You may experience feelings of fullness but it should not be painful. If at any point you experience significant pain please let our staff know.
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You may be asked to move into different positions to assist the barium flow through the bowel.

You will then be repositioned to be upright to allow the barium to drain out of the large bowel via the tube. Once as much barium has been drained from the large bowel as possible, air will then be introduced via the tube.

X-ray images will be taken from different angles to view the large bowel.

After sufficient images are obtained, the tube will be removed from the rectum and you may go to the bathroom.

Post Procedure Care:
You may inadvertently pass some liquid stool motions after the test. You may also feel bloated for a few hours afterwards due to the air introduced into the bowel.

Maintaining good fluid intake for the first few days after the barium enema is encouraged. This assists in washing the barium out of the bowels and preventing constipation. Bowel motions may appear grey/white in colour until the barium is washed out.

Discharge
You will be able to go home immediately after your procedure if you have no other medical conditions/concerns that require treatment.

You may resume eating and drinking as normal unless otherwise directed.

Results:
The results together with the procedure report will be sent to your referring doctor.

Return to your doctor to discuss examination results.

Radiation Risk
Most medical imaging tests, except MRI and ultrasound, involve exposure to radiation from X-rays. Your doctor considers that the benefits of the examination you require to be greater than the small risk posed by the radiation exposure.

Please advise us at the time of booking and/or at the time of your imaging procedure, if you think you may be pregnant.

Contact information:
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References:
Inside Radiology:
The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists®