

# Barium Enema X-ray

## What is a Barium Enema?

A Barium Enema is an X-ray examination of the large bowel. Bowel preparation is essential. Your bowel must be completely empty when you attend; otherwise misleading appearances may cause us to have to repeat the examination at a later date and will delay any necessary treatment. The examination is a little unpleasant and causes some discomfort. We will of course do our best to minimise this.

Before the test, you will be asked to change from your clothing into a gown. In the room, the radiologist or radiographer will introduce him or herself to you and usually starts by giving you a small injection into a vein in your arm to prevent spasm of the bowel muscles which ensures better pictures. The injection is not a sedative and you will be fully awake during the procedure.

Next, a small tube is placed in the back passage (rectum). White liquid (barium) is passed through this tube into the bowel and causes it to show up on the X-Ray screen. When enough barium is in the bowel, some of it is then drained out. Air is then introduced gently into the bowel through the same tube. Most patients experience a little discomfort at this time whilst others experience colicky pains.

Several X-rays are taken in various positions until the whole bowel has been seen. The main part of the examination is then over but you may have to have one more X-ray taken after you have been to the toilet.

The barium enema takes about 20 minutes to complete but you will be in the room for a little longer whilst the images are checked.

After the test, you may dress and go home although you should not drive for one hour after the injection. You may also eat and drink normally. You may notice that your bowel motion is a little pale for a day or so afterwards. This is perfectly normal. You should drink plenty of fluids for 24 hours after the test to flush the barium out of your bowel.

## **Preparation**

The examination's success requires you to be careful with your diet, to be starved for a time and to take a fairly strong laxative. This ensures that the bowel is empty on the day of the examination.

## **Diet**

Please do not take any iron tablets or bran for **seven** days before the appointment.

Please follow a 'low-residue' diet for **five** days before the appointment

## **Starvation**

You will be required to starve for approximately 33 hours before the examination. However, fluids may be taken as confirmed in your appointment letter.

## **Laxative**

You will be issued with a prescription by your GP for bowel cleansing solution (strong laxative). Please ignore the instructions on the sachets and follow the instructions given in your appointment letter.

**The preparation will be confirmed in your appointment letter.**