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X Ray Department

Bon Secours Hospital

Tralee, Co Kerry.

Patient Information Leaflet
For a
Barium Enema

Barium Enema

This leaflet will give you the following information:

- What is a Barium Enema?
- How should I prepare?
- What will I experience during and after the procedure?
- Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

What is a Barium Enema?



A barium enema is an x ray examination of the lower gastrointestinal (GI) tract - this is made up of the large intestine (also known as the colon). This examination looks at the ascending colon, transverse colon, descending colon, the sigmoid colon and the rectum.

This examination uses a special form of x ray called fluoroscopy and a contrast dye called barium in order to visualize the bowel, Fluoroscopy allows us to see the bowel in "real time" on a monitor. With the lower GI tract filled with barium the radiologist (X ray doctor) is able to see and assess the anatomy of the bowel.

How Should I Prepare

- Before a barium enema your bowel must be empty of any faeces so that the clearest possible images can be taken. Your doctor will give you clear instructions on how to prepare your bowel for your barium enema (regards diet and bowel prep).
- If you are coming to the X ray department as an out patient you may need to arrange to stay at home the day before your test to avoid any inconvenience and be as comfortable as possible.
- You should inform your doctor of any medications you are taking, if you have any allergies or if you are a diabetic. If you are a diabetic please inform the x ray staff as soon as you arrive at the department and bring your medication and appropriate food with you.

- Please take your usual prescribed medications unless clearly advised otherwise by your doctor.
- Do not bring any valuables to the hospital with you (e.g. jewelry).
- Women of child bearing years should inform their doctor if they think there is any possibility that they are pregnant. Current radiation legislation policy dictates that female patients who have not gone through the menopause must have had a period within ten days before the x ray test.

What will I experience during and after the procedure?

- When you arrive at the X ray department you will be shown to a cubicle to get undressed. You will be provided with a gown and dressing gown before being escorted into the examination room.
- The equipment will consist of an x ray table and x ray camera. The x ray camera is suspended over the table. The Radiologist and Radiographer will remain in the room throughout the test however they will stand behind a lead screen while taking the x ray images. Please talk to the X ray staff if you have any concerns or worries.
- You will be asked to lie on the X ray table on your side and a small, flexible tube will be gently inserted into your back passage / rectum. This may be an uncomfortable experience but should not be painful. You may also be given an injection of Buscopan into the vein of your arm - this drug relaxes the bowel and prevents spasm which would hinder the test.
- A barium sulphate liquid is passed through the tube in the rectum into the colon. The Radiographer will then take a series of x ray pictures of your bowel; while asking you to lie in a number of positions to encourage the barium to spread throughout the loops of your bowel. Some air might be introduced to assist with the even coating of barium on the bowel wall. This may be uncomfortable and give you a bloated feeling but will pass. Some patients worry that they will not be able to hold the barium liquid and air in their bowel - please try to hold on by clenching the muscles of your bottom tightly however if some of the barium escapes do not allow this to upset you.

- Once the radiologist is satisfied that all the necessary images have been taken; the tube will be removed from your rectum and you will be shown to the bathroom.
- A barium enema is usually completed within 30 minutes.

After the examination

- After the examination you will need to visit the toilet - it is advisable that you remain close to your bathroom facilities at home for the evening to avoid discomfort.
- Your stools may appear white for a day or two - do not worry this is the barium liquid passing from your bowel.
- It is advisable to drink plenty of fluids for two - three days to avoid constipation. If you have problems with your heart or water retention you may not be able to drink this amount safely. If in doubt or if you become breathless or your legs appear swollen contact your GP immediately.
- If you experience constipation i.e. you do not have a bowel movement for more than two days after the barium enema or you are experiencing discomfort when going to the bathroom please contact your GP promptly for advice.
- If you have a Buscopan injection you cannot drive for an hour afterwards as the injection can make your vision blurry.

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

A radiologist will analyze the images and send a report to the doctor who referred you for the barium enema in the first place. Your doctor / consultant will either contact you with the results within a week or will give you the results on your next appointment. Please contact your doctor's office to clarify any instructions that they may have given you.

If you have any further questions please contact your doctor or the x ray department (066 7149869).

Please cancel your appointment by phone if you are unable to come - preferably at least one day before the examination date.

Questions

We understand that there may be questions or queries that you would like to be answered and sometimes you may forget what you want to ask.

The space below has been included for you to write down any questions or queries that you may have.