



Barium Enema

Patient Information

What is a Barium Enema:

A barium enema lets a radiologist get a closer look at the inside of your colon. Pictures are taken using an x-ray machine called a fluoroscope and barium as a contrast material.



Why is a Barium Enema Done:

A barium enema can help find many problems like:

- A mass
- Blockage
- Cancer
- Diverticulae (small pouches that form on the colon wall that can become inflamed, or red and swollen)
- Inflammatory bowel disease
- Polyps (small tumors that are usually not harmful which grow on the intestine wall)
- Stricture (narrowing of the colon)



Getting Ready for the Exam:

Your health care provider will tell you how to get ready for a barium enema. You will need to follow the directions very carefully. You will be asked to eat only clear liquids for one or two days before the exam.

Clear Liquids Include:

- Broth
- Juice without pulp (no orange juice or tomato juice)
- Plain water
- Tea and coffee without milk or cream

Because a clean and empty colon is needed for the exam, you will be asked to use laxatives, and possibly have an enema before the exam.



What You Can Expect During the Exam:

Before starting, the technologist (the person doing your exam) will explain the exam and answer any questions you may have. You will be asked to take off all clothing and change into a gown. You will lie on the exam table on your back with your arms at your side. An x-ray will be taken to make sure your intestines are clean. Next, you will lie on your side on the x-ray table.

The technologist will gently insert a small, lubricated enema tube tip into your anus a little at a time. You may feel like you need to go to the bathroom and have cramps, so try to relax and breathe slowly. Next, the barium will slowly flow through the tube into your colon. A small balloon at the tip of the enema tube may be filled with air to help keep the barium inside.

The radiologist will take pictures with a fluoroscope as the barium moves through your body. The fluoroscope is a special x-ray machine that shows pictures on a screen like a TV. After this part of the exam is done, the technologist will take more pictures. You will be asked to turn from side to side while pictures are taken. Turning helps cover the walls of your colon with the barium.

After the Exam:

You should drink an extra 4 to 6 glasses of water each day for the next few days after the exam to help get rid of any barium that is still in your colon. You may also be asked to take a laxative after your exam. Your stool may be white for a few days because of the barium.

Risks:

Some radiation is used with a barium enema, but any risks of the radiation are much less than the benefits of barium enema exams. The barium contrast material may also cause constipation.

Report:

Results from the exam will not be ready right away. A radiologist will look at your pictures and report back to your health care provider in 24 to 48 hours, Monday through Friday. Your health care provider will give you the results.

Directions:

Waverly Health Center is at 312 Ninth Street, SW in Waverly. Please go through the green entrance and check in at the registration desk. When you have finished your check in, you will be taken to the radiology waiting area.