

Barium Enema

Patient Information



What is a barium enema?

A barium enema is a screening study used to produce a clear xray of the large bowel (also known as the colon), and is used to help in the diagnosis of bowel problems. For this examination to be satisfactory it is very important that you follow the instructions given very carefully.

What preparation is required?

Preparation takes 3 days, and includes a special low residue diet which must be followed prior to the examination. (Diet recommendations are provided below.) Please note, if the bowel is not adequately cleansed the examination may have to be repeated.

1. Low Residue Diet

You must follow a low residue diet for **3 full days** prior to your x-ray.

This means you **must not eat any of the following:**

- fruit or fruit juices (strained fruit juice permissible)
- cereals, muesli or vegetables
- wholemeal bread or any wholemeal products
- nuts or gaseous drinks
- icecream, cream, cooked fats (meat fat, sausages)

It is suggested your diet **should consist of the following:**

- white rice, clear soup
- white spaghetti, jelly
- white bread, honey, vegemite
- lean meat, chicken, junket
- fish, skim milk
- egg (poached or boiled), polyunsaturated margarine
- tea, coffee – also see following sheet

2. Fluid Intake

It is **extremely important** to drink at least 1 to 1½ litres of water each day. Adequate fluid intake decreases the discomfort often associated with this preparation.

3. Medication

It is **extremely important** to continue taking your prescribed medication.

4. Time Line

Day 1 Commence low residue diet and plenty of fluids.

Day 2 Continue low residue diet and plenty of fluids.

Also take 30 mls of Caster oil at approximately 7.00pm.

Day 3 Continue low residue diet and plenty of fluids, until 12 noon when you commence a GO KIT PLUS (you can purchase this kit from North Coast Radiology or the chemist) or a GO KIT plus a suppository.

Note: If you purchase a GO KIT plus suppository from the chemist, use the suppository approximately 6.30am the morning of the examination.

Day 4 Day of the examination. You must drink as much clear fluid as is comfortable up until your appointment time.

Note: You may need to take a laxative after your barium enema.

5. Suggestions for a Low Residue Diet

Eggs: poached, boiled, scrambled or lightly fried, canned spaghetti preferably without cheese

Sandwiches: suggested fillings of chicken, spaghetti, egg, vegemite or honey

Lean meat: lamb, veal, port with fat cut off before cooking, chicken without skin, baked, grilled, poached, steamed or microwaved

Sauces: honeyed chicken, lemon (using strained lemon juice), apricot and white sauce using skim milk, tomato sauce

Your appointment details

Date

Time

Location

Biscuits: Sao biscuits, plain sweet biscuits, e.g. milk arrowroot or morning coffee

Breads: also plain scones and pikelets, may be toasted

Fruit juice: clear or strained

Beverages: milk coffee or hot chocolate (using skim milk)

Fish: steamed, baked, grilled

Soup: chicken noodle (homemade or purchased), tomato soup

Pasta: all types of commercial pasta, white rice, fragrant rice (no wholemeal pasta or rice)

Herbs/spices: mild

Desserts: baked rice and custard (using skim milk), bread and butter pudding (using skim milk and margarine), sago pudding, pancakes

What documentation is required?

Bring your referral and any relevant previous xrays for comparison.

Also bring your Medicare card, pension or healthcare card or Veteran's Affairs card details if applicable.

What you need to tell us prior to your appointment?

At the time of arranging your appointment, please advise us if you have diabetes - we need to know such detail prior to your appointment. You must also advise us if you are being treated for glaucoma or heart failure, or have ever had a reaction to the drug Buscopan.

Also, please advise us if you are pregnant.

What will happen during the procedure?

Prior to the examination you will be asked to change into a gown, and then directed to lie on an xray table. A small, flexible, lubricated tube will be placed into your rectum.

An injection of Buscopan may then be given to relax the colon to reduce discomfort and improve the image quality. This injection may cause temporary blurring of vision, and if this is the case you should not drive a car until your vision has returned to normal.

A white barium mixture and then air is passed into the bowel via this tubing. The air is used to help the barium fluid flow around the bowel, and you may feel a "bubbling" sensation.

You will be asked to roll into a variety of positions to make sure that your bowel is well coated with the mixture which will assist in getting clear xray images. It is important to retain the barium mixture and air until the end of the examination. You may be asked to hold your breath for several seconds to assist in the securing of clear images.

What are the risks?

You will receive a dose of x-ray radiation. The benefits of detecting disease are believed to outweigh any potential risks from receiving such a dose.

Please, however, advise the radiographer if you are, or think you may be, pregnant.

How long will the examination take?

The examination will take approximately 45 minutes.

What can you expect after the examination?

Once the examination is complete, most of the fluid and air is drained away before the tube is removed. You will be able to go to the toilet before dressing.

There should be no ill effects after the examination although your bowel action may well be white for some days, or cramping discomfort may be experienced for a short period of time. Drink lots of fluids and have a high fibre diet for 2 to 3 days to flush the barium out of your large bowel, otherwise it may cause constipation.

What happens with the images and report?

After your examination you may be given a copy of the most pertinent images from your study. A report will be provided directly to your referring doctor. We will store digital copies of all studies and reports on our secure patient information system for comparison with any future examinations.

