

Barium enema

What is a barium enema?

A barium enema is a radiographic examination of the large bowel. A combination of barium and air is used to visualise the large bowel. It is sometimes referred to as a 'double contrast' enema. Barium coats the lining and the folds within the large bowel. Air is used to expand and open the bowel.

What preparation is required?

Preparation for this examination usually begins 24 hours before your appointment. You are required to obtain a bowel preparation kit from your local pharmacy.

Instructions for use and fasting preparation are contained within the pack and should be started at 12 noon the day before your appointment. The importance of a clean bowel is to ensure no faecal matter is left within the bowel as it may obscure normal anatomy.

Upon arrival, you will need to remove all clothing and change into a hospital gown.

What is involved?

Lying on your side, the radiologist will insert an enema tube into the rectum. A small balloon at the end of the tube will be gently inflated to hold the tube in place. A bag pre-filled with a barium solution is attached to the enema tube and slowly allowed to run into the rectum to fill the large bowel. Air may be introduced into the bowel to allow the barium to flow easily and to assist coating the lining of the bowel.

The enema tube will remain in the rectum until the examination is completed. The barium mixture will then be drained out from the rectum as much as possible. The tube is then removed and you will be taken to a private bathroom to use the toilet facilities.

Are there any side effects?

Some people can experience stomach cramps or discomfort when the air is introduced. Mild constipation may occur after the procedure. You will be advised to drink plenty of fluids following the procedure to help wash through any remaining barium within the bowel. Please alert a staff member if you experience any symptoms of nausea. This is not an allergic reaction.

How long will this take?

A barium enema will take approximately 45 minutes to complete.

How do I get my results?

Digital images are immediately available to your doctor and your records will be kept permanently. This occurs through a system called PACS. **If a priority report is requested it will be issued within two hours and faxed or emailed to your doctor, however this can sometimes take up to 24 hours.**

If your referring doctor wants to see you on the day of your examination, please advise the reception staff when you arrive for your appointment, so the appropriate information can be made available for you to take to your doctor.

How much will this cost?

Please ask reception staff of the cost involved at the time of booking your appointment.

Important

It is important to let us know when you make your booking if you are or think you may be pregnant or are breastfeeding.

It is important to bring with you your referral, previous x-rays and any other tests (only if previous ones were **not** done at Cabrini or I-MED).

Questions

For more information or to make an appointment, please contact Cabrini Medical Imaging using the relevant number below.