

Barium Enema

Patient Information

Overview

A Barium Enema (BE) is an x-ray exam of the large intestine. This exam requires us to fill your large intestine (colon) with a liquid contrast called barium. Certain exams also require us to introduce air along with the barium. Please note that you may have mild cramping at the conclusion of the exam, and you may want someone to accompany you to the Hospital for this test. There are a few modifications of this exam, some requiring that a water-based contrast agent be introduced into the colon.

Preparation for the exam:

You need to contact your physician concerning your bowel prep kit. Two days prior to your exam your diet should be clear fluids only such as clear broth, jello, apple or cranberry juice, ginger ale, cola, tea or coffee (do not use cream or milk). On the morning of your exam you may drink small amounts of clear liquids. Do not eat any solid foods. The instructions are important to follow because any fecal material in your colon may alter the results of your exam. You may also take any necessary medications the morning of your exam. If you are diabetic, please consult with your doctor before following these preparation instructions.

Appointment time:

Your appointment will be scheduled ahead of time by your doctors' office through the hospital scheduling service. Please arrive 30 minutes prior to your exam, as you will be required to register. If you are unsure of your appointment time, need to reschedule, or cancel your appointment, please contact your doctors' office or the hospital scheduling service at 770-219-7666 Menu Option 1. Please try to be patient and be assured that we will get to your study as quickly as possible.

Your Barium Enema:

You will be escorted into one of our exam rooms by a radiologic technologist and asked to change into a hospital gown. As an alternative, you may arrive wearing sweatpants and a sweatshirt/tee-shirt that does not have buttons, zippers, snaps, or rivets on them. You will be asked to remove any necklaces, earrings, removable dental work, body piercings/jewelry, and brassiere, as metal and hard plastic interferes with the x-ray image. A plain x-ray of your abdomen, called a "scout film" will be taken prior to your exam. This x-ray will show us your basic anatomy, and ensure that there is nothing on your clothing or jewelry that will obscure our films. This also tells us if you followed the preparation required for your exam. The radiologist will insert a tube into your rectum that will allow a barium liquid to fill your colon. You may feel some mild discomfort or cramping from this, however it should not be painful. Certain exams require us to put air into your colon as well to help produce better x-ray pictures of your intestine. You will be required to turn in various positions while the radiologist uses a special x-ray machine called a fluoroscope. This fluoroscope is connected to a TV screen, and it allows the radiologist to see your anatomy and take any necessary x-ray pictures to make an accurate diagnosis. The radiologic technologist will then take a few plain x-rays of your abdomen. After a quick review of the films to ensure that your colon is adequately visualized on the x-ray pictures, we will remove the tube and you will be escorted to the bathroom to allow the barium to be evacuated from your colon. The total exam time is typically 1 hour.

The conclusion of your exam:

You will receive written, take-home instructions at the conclusion of your exam. You may eat and drink immediately following your exam. It is important that you drink plenty of liquids following your exam to avoid constipation from the barium.

Results:

The radiologist will interpret your exam and the results of your exam will be sent to your doctor.



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Imaging Center Gainesville
770-219-1300

Imaging Center Braselton
770-848-6150

NGMC Main Campus
770-219-8035