

Barium Enema

A barium enema is an x-ray test of the large intestine, also called the colon. This test lets your doctor see the lining of your colon and rectum. Be sure to review these instructions before your test so you can prepare.

- If you take medicines each day, ask your doctor which of your medicines you should take the day before and the morning of the test.
- If you have diabetes and take insulin, check with your doctor to see if you need to adjust your insulin dose for this test.
- If you are pregnant, or think you might be, tell the staff before the x-ray is taken.

Arrive on time for your test. Plan on this test taking about 1 to 2 hours.

Before the Test

Buy these medicines from your local pharmacy. You will take them the day before your test to clear out your colon. Ask the pharmacist for help if needed.

- 10-ounce bottle of magnesium citrate
- Small box of Biscodyl (Dulcolax) laxative tablets – You will need to take 4 tablets

The Day Before Your Test

Your colon and rectum must be empty of all stool before this test. You will need to be on a clear liquid diet and take the laxative medicines.

- Do not eat solid foods or drink milk products the rest of today and until the test is done.
- **Do not drink any red liquids.**
- **Drink clear liquids only**, such as:
 - › Water
 - › Clear broth or bouillon
 - › Clear fruit juices without pulp such as apple, white grape, white cranberry and lemonade
 - › Clear drinks such as lemon-lime soda, Kool-aid or sport drinks
 - › Decaffeinated coffee or tea without milk or nondairy creamer
 - › Jello or popsicles
- Drink plenty of water or other clear liquids from the list above throughout the day.
- At 1 PM the day before your test:
 - › Pour the whole, 10-ounce bottle of magnesium citrate over ice and drink it.
 - › Take 2 Biscodyl (Dulcolax) tablets.
 - › If you work the day before your test, you may want to wait to take these medicines until you are at home.
 - › At 5 PM or 4 hours after you took the other laxative medicines, take 2 more Biscodyl (Dulcolax) tablets with 8 ounces or 240 ml of water.

- You will need to use the toilet often during the afternoon and evening.
- **After midnight, do not eat or drink anything, including water.**

The Morning of Your Test

If you are to take medicine, take with sips of water only. If you take other medicines later in the day, wait until after your test to take them.

During the Test

- You will wear a hospital gown.
- You lie on an x-ray table below a machine that looks like a TV. You will be awake for this test and the staff will try to keep you comfortable.
- A tube is put into your rectum and a balloon is inflated on the tube to keep it in place. The doctor watches as a barium mixture flows through the tube into your colon. Air may also be put into the tube to expand the colon to get better x-ray pictures. You are asked to roll on your side during the test.
- You may feel cramping and pressure. Take slow deep breaths through your mouth to help you relax.
- X-rays are taken. You will be asked to hold your breath at times.
- The tube will be removed. You will be taken to a toilet to empty the barium and air mixture from your colon.
- Another x-ray may be taken to finish your test.
- Test results are sent to your doctor. Your doctor will share the results with you.

After the Test

- You will be able to eat your normal diet.
- Drink plenty of water and other liquids the next 2 to 3 days. Avoid carbonated drinks during this time because they may cause you to have gas.
- Eat whole grains, fruits and vegetables, and/or take a mild laxative to help remove the barium.
- Your stool will be white or light in color due to the barium for a day or 2 after the test.

Call Your Doctor

Contact your doctor if you:

- Do not pass stool for more than 2 days after your test or if you are not able to pass gas from your rectum.
- Have a pencil-thin stool or notice a change in your usual bowel habits.
- Have pain in your lower abdomen (belly) or stomach.

- Do not have normal stools in 3 days.
- Have questions or concerns about your illness, medicine or the procedure.

Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.