

Before the procedure

- Do not eat or drink liquids for eight hours before the procedure, generally after midnight. You may be given additional instructions about a special diet for one to two days prior to the procedure.
- If you are pregnant or suspect that you may be pregnant, you should notify your doctor.
- Notify the technologist upon arrival if you are sensitive to or are allergic to any medications, latex, tape, and anesthetic agents (local and general).
- Notify the technologist upon arrival of all medications (prescribed and over-the-counter) and herbal supplements that you are taking. Your doctor may advise you to withhold certain medications prior to the procedure.
- Your health care provider will instruct you about specific ways to prepare your bowel for the test. You may be asked to take a laxative, undergo an enema, use a rectal laxative suppository, and/or drink a special fluid that helps prepare your bowel.
- Notify the radiologist if you have had a recent barium swallow or upper GI procedure, as this may interfere with obtaining an optimal X-ray exposure of the lower GI area.

Based on your medical condition, your health care provider may request other specific preparation.

During the procedure

A barium enema may be performed on an outpatient basis or as part of your stay in a hospital. Procedures may vary depending on your condition and your doctor's practices.

Generally, a barium enema will follow this process:

- You will be asked to remove any clothing, jewelry, or other objects that may interfere with the procedure. You will be given a gown to wear.
- You will be positioned horizontally on the examination table in a side-lying position.
- A rectal tube will be inserted into the rectum to allow the barium to flow into the intestine. A small balloon is inflated on the end of the tube to hold the tube in place while barium will be allowed to flow slowly into the intestine.
- If a double contrast study is ordered, air is injected via the rectum in order to expand the large intestine. You may experience cramping in the lower abdominal area as the barium is instilled. To lessen the discomfort, it may be helpful to take slow deep breaths.
- During the procedure, the machine and examination table will move and you may be asked to assume various positions as the X-rays are being taken.

- The radiologist will take single pictures, a series of X-rays, or a video (fluoroscopy) as the barium moves through the intestine.
- Once all required X-rays have been taken, you will be assisted from the table. You may feel the need to have a bowel movement. It will be important to resist the urge to prevent the barium from leaking back out. At the appropriate time, you will be given a bedpan or assisted to the bathroom as needed.

After the procedure

- Following the examination, some barium will be expelled immediately. You will be assisted to the bathroom or given a bedpan.
- You may resume your normal diet and activities after a barium enema, unless your doctor advises you differently.