

What you need to know about the Barium Enema and Air Contrast Barium Enema...

What is a Barium Enema?

The Barium Enema is most often used to diagnose problems with your digestive tract. It consists of a white fluid that is designed to make your colon or large intestine more visible on X-ray film. An Air Contrast Enema involves the injection of air, following the barium enema, in order to further expand the colon.

How does a Barium Enema work?

The white barium fluid allows the radiologist to see the contours of your colon with X-rays. In order to best evaluate your case, the radiologist will ask you to move from one position to another on the X-ray table in order to obtain a series of images.

May I take someone with me?

Certainly. Your friend or family member is welcome to stay in the waiting room.

How should I prepare for my exam?

The day before:

It is important that you carefully follow the preparation for this exam. Your bowel needs to be as clean as possible in order to obtain a clear and accurate picture of the colon. It is important that you do not eat or drink any dairy products the day before your exam.

Also, the evening before the exam, you will be given a strong laxative. You should continue to take prescription medicines on schedule — unless your physician has instructed you differently. Do not eat or drink after midnight on the day prior to your exam. On the day of your exam, do not eat or drink.

What about my clothing?

You may be asked to undress, put on a hospital gown, pajama bottoms, and remove any jewelry or other items that may interfere with the X-ray.

What will happen during the exam?

You will be asked to lie on your side on the X-ray table. The lubricated enema tip will be gently inserted into your rectum and a contrast material (barium mixture) will flow into your colon. If the radiologist or your physician orders an air contrast barium enema, air will also be introduced into the colon. The radiologist will then examine your colon by watching the barium mixture using a fluoroscope with television monitor. After the radiologist has completed his filming, a technologist will then take a series of X-rays in order to provide a better overview of the colon. After filming, you will go to the bathroom to expel the barium and then return for a final X-ray of your abdomen.

Following the exam

Your physician may direct you to drink eight glasses of water, during the following 24 hours, to help you expel the remaining barium. A mild laxative may also be permissible.

When will I learn the results?

The radiologist will evaluate your case and report to your physician. Normally, within 3 working days, your physician will inform you of the results of your exam and any other testing or treatment that may be necessary.

Whom should I call if I have any other questions?

If you have any questions, please feel free to call Northfield Hospital's Medical Imaging Department at (507) 646-1143.