

Barium Enema (Colon X-ray)

General Information

Your health care provider has ordered an X-ray of your colon. This procedure allows the radiologist to see your large intestine (colon or bowel) by the use of barium (a thick, chalky liquid).

Your large intestine joins your small intestine to your anus. It receives waste products from the small intestine that results in a bowel movement.

During the exam, liquid barium will be slowly put into your colon through a slender tube. Using X-ray, the radiologist can look for abnormalities of your colon.

The procedure takes about 45 minutes.

What To Tell Your Health Care Provider and Radiologist

Tell your health care provider and radiologist if you:

- have any allergies to latex or medicine
- are breastfeeding, pregnant or think you may be pregnant
- **have diabetes** (Ask for an early morning appointment and talk with your health care provider about your medicine needs.)
- take any other medicines. (Check with your health care provider see if you have special medicine instructions.)

Two Days Before Your Procedure

Purchase the following items:

- magnesium citrate (one 10-ounce bottle)
- 4 Dulcolax® laxative tablets
- 1 Dulcolax laxative suppository.

You can find these at most local grocery stores, drugstores and large retailers.

The Day Before Your Procedure

Please follow the preparation schedule listed below, unless your health care provider gives you other instructions.

Important: Do not have milk, cream or non-dairy creamer. Do not eat any solid food.

- At breakfast:** You may have water, clear broth or bouillon, soda pop, sports beverages, gelatin (no red gelatin), frozen ice treats on a stick, coffee or tea, and fruit juices without pulp (apple, white grape).
- At 12 p.m. (noon):** You may have water, clear broth or bouillon, soda pop, sports beverages, gelatin (no red gelatin), frozen ice treats on a stick, coffee or tea, and fruit juices without pulp (apple, white grape).
- At 1 p.m.:** Drink one 8-ounce glass of water.
- At 2 p.m.:** Drink one 8-ounce glass of water.
- At 3 p.m.:** Drink one 8-ounce glass of water.
- At 4 p.m.:** Drink one 8-ounce glass of water.

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- ❑ **At 5 p.m.:** You may have water, clear broth or bouillon, soda pop, sports beverages, gelatin (no red gelatin), frozen ice treats on a stick, coffee or tea, and fruit juices without pulp (apple, white grape).
- ❑ **At 5:30 p.m.:** Drink one 10-ounce bottle of magnesium citrate. Follow the instructions on the bottle.
- ❑ **At 6 p.m.:** Drink one 8-ounce glass of water.
- ❑ **At 7 p.m.:** Drink one 8-ounce glass of water.
- ❑ **At 7:30 p.m.:** Take all 4 Dulcolax tablets (not the suppository). Follow the instructions on the label. **Do not chew the tablets.**
- ❑ **At 8 p.m.:** Drink one 8-ounce glass of water.
- ❑ **At 9 p.m.:** Drink one 8-ounce glass of water.

Do not eat or drink anything after midnight the night before your exam.

The Day of Your Procedure

- **At least 2 hours before your procedure:** Use one Dulcolax suppository. Follow the instructions on the label.
- Take any medicines you need with a small sip of water, or as directed by your health care provider.
- Bring a list of your medicines and doses with you to the hospital. Include all prescription, over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, herbal or natural products.
- You will change into a hospital gown.
- The radiology staff will talk with you and tell you what to expect.

During Your Procedure

- You will lie on an exam table.
- A flexible, lubricated enema tube will be inserted into your rectum.
- You will receive an enema with a barium solution. The radiologist will use a fluoroscope machine to watch the barium as it passes through your large bowel.

- The radiologist will take many X-rays of your colon. You will be asked to change positions to get the X-ray images.
- Other X-rays may be taken. Air may also be used.
- You will be able to go the bathroom to expel (get rid of) the barium.

After Your Procedure

- Barium may cause severe constipation. It is important that you expel the barium.
 - If you can — and if your health care provider says it's OK — drink 8 to 10 glasses of water each day for the next 4 days.
 - You may also take a laxative (such as milk of magnesia) if your health care provider says it's OK.
- Resume your normal diet.
- Take your regular medicines as instructed by your health care provider.
- Return to an activity level that is comfortable for you.
- You may not have a “normal” bowel movement for 3 days. Your stools may be light in color.

Follow-up Results

- The radiologist will look at and interpret the X-rays.
- Your health care provider will receive the exam results. He or she will either talk with you about the results or mail you the results.

When To Call Your Health Care Provider

Call your health care provider if the barium is not expelled in 3 days, or if you have severe constipation.