

# **BARIUM ENEMA**

## **What is it?**

A barium enema is an examination of your large bowel - the colon and rectum.

## **What preparation is needed for the examination?**

Please tell us if you are diabetic. Women will also be asked about the possibility of being pregnant. Before attending for this examination, you will have been given or sent some tablets/powder to take as bowel preparation. The success of this examination relies partly on you keeping to the instructions for the bowel preparation. This is an unpleasant, but essential, part of the procedure, as the bowel must be clean for a high quality examination.

## **What exactly happens during the examination?**

When you arrive in the Department either a radiographer, radiographer's helper or nurse will take you into a cubicle to get you changed for the examination. They will then take you into the x-ray room, where they will explain the examination to you. Please feel free to ask them any questions you may have. The Radiologist may also discuss your symptoms with you and will explain what is going to happen.

You will then be asked to lie on the table of the x-ray machine. This is a flat hard table top and, if you have difficulty lying on such a surface, please ask for a mattress to be placed on it. The Consultant Radiologist (doctor) will give you a small injection into a vein in the arm. This is to stop the bowel contracting so that we can see it properly and it will also make the examination more comfortable for you. The injection will dilate the pupil of your eye and this may cause some temporary blurred vision. You will be safe to drive afterwards. If you have glaucoma or heart disease, you will be given a special injection that will not cause you any problem in this respect. It is extremely uncommon for any reaction to Buscopan to occur. It is possible that it could unmask undiagnosed glaucoma, so if you develop a very

painful red eye afterwards, contact a doctor immediately.

The radiologist will then insert a small tube into the rectum and run in the barium suspension. The colon is about half filled with barium and then distended by gas. We use carbon dioxide as this is reabsorbed quickly, so that you will not be distended and uncomfortable afterwards. You will be turned from side to side whilst the radiologist takes a series of films of your colon and rectum. The radiographer will take one or two films of you before you are allowed to go to the toilet.

### **Does this procedure hurt?**

The examination is uncomfortable but not painful. If you are worried about your ability to hold onto the barium, please tell the radiologist as we can use a different tube system to help this. There is a degree of embarrassment to this examination but you will be dealt with sympathetically and with respect. For most patients the worry beforehand is much worse than the procedure turns out to be.

### **How long will it take?**

About 1 hour.

### **When will I get my results?**

When you have had the examination, the radiographer will tell you how and approximately when you will get the results but they are usually sent to the doctor who referred you to us within 48 hours.

### **Aftercare**

For the next few days, you will pass the remaining barium, so your faeces will be white. Barium can be constipating and to prevent this we recommend drinking plenty of fluids and eating more fruit. By the time you leave the Department, the effects of the injection, and distension from the gas, should have worn off and you can eat and drink normally.

# HCA

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