

## Barium Enema: Procedure and Risks

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### DESCRIPTION

A barium enema is an X-ray test that can detect abnormalities or changes in the large intestine (colon). The procedure is also called lower gastrointestinal (GI) tract radiography, colon X-ray, lower GI exam, or lower GI X-ray. A barium enema is the injection of a liquid into the rectum through a small tube. Barium enemas provide low risk and are even less expensive than a colonoscopy. They are commonly used to diagnose inflammatory diseases and colorectal cancer. Barium enemas also help detect diverticulum (a pouch pushing out from the colon), polyps, and structural modifications in the large intestine. For example, the test can help diagnose colonic volvulus (twisting of the large intestine), colorectal cancer or colon polyps, diverticulosis or diverticulitis (bulges in the wall of the colon), inflammatory bowel disease, such as ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease, and large bowel obstruction. Barium enemas can help recognise changes in the large intestine, such as the rectum and colon. A doctor may recommend a barium enema to find polyps, inflammation, or cancer in the rectum or colon. The most common reason that may need a barium enema is after rectal surgery.

### Procedure

This examination usually involves radiation in order to create images of the tissues, organs, bones, and vessels within the skin. A barium enema uses a special type of X-ray called fluoroscopy. Barium is a contrast medium, which means it enhances the visibility of internal structures during radiography. The barium liquid, which is white and chalky, coats the inner lining of the

large intestine. The X-ray machine can then take pictures of the substances present in the body. This allows healthcare providers to observe the shape, lining, and size of the large intestine. When the healthcare provider has collected all of the required images, they will remove the tube and allow patient to use the restroom. After the test, drink plenty of fluids and eat foods high in fibre. Whole grains, vegetables, and fruits are some examples. This will help in the removal of the barium and the regulation of the bowel movements. The healthcare provider may also suggest the patient take a laxative. For a few days, the stool may be white, grey, or light brown. This is natural because the barium is leaving the body. One should avoid the solid foods and dairy products before taking the test. Drink only clear fluids (for example, broth, water, and popsicles). Certain medications should be avoided for a few hours or days before the test. Use laxatives to clear the bowels of any waste. Other laxatives that are commonly used include magnesium citrate, bisacodyl tablets, and bisacodyl suppositories.

### CONCLUSION

Barium enemas generally safe, rare complications such as allergic reaction to barium, perforation (tear) in the colon lining, severe constipation (impaction), or obstruction from barium can occur. Although barium is not radioactive, X-rays generate a small amount of radiation. After a barium enema, consult the doctor immediately if the patient experiences any signs of complications like Dizziness or weakness, abdominal distention (swelling), severe abdominal pain (severe pain, Bloody stools, Persistent nausea vomiting).

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