

Barium Enema (BE)



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What is a Barium Enema?

Barium enema is a special x-ray done under fluoroscopy of the large intestine, which includes the colon and rectum. Before x-rays are taken, a liquid called barium sulfate is placed in the rectum. The liquid is a type of contrast. Contrast highlights specific areas in the body, creating a clearer image. The barium eventually passes out of the body with the stools.

CPT Code

74280 Double (Air and Barium most common) 74270 Single

Indications

diagnose colon cancer or the extent of inflammatory bowel disease, failed colonoscopy

Contraindications

severe colitis, recent colonic biopsy, toxic megacolon, known or suspected colonic perforations, pregnancy

How Does Your Patient Prepare?

Your patient should obtain colon preparation from their ordering physician.

What Happens During the Test?

Our technologist will take a detailed medical history of your patient. Your patient will be positioned on his side on the exam table. A small rubber tip is inserted into the rectum where barium is allowed to flow into the intestine. Some cramping may be present as the barium is instilled. Utilizing fluoroscopy, the radiologist watches as barium flows through the tip to coat or highlight the colon.

A technologist then takes a series of x-rays in different positions to view all angles of the colon. The tip is then removed from the rectum. The patient is asked to use the restroom and then returns for one final x-ray.

The procedure typically takes 30 to 60 minutes to complete.

After the Test

Your patient may resume normal activities following the exam. Barium may cause constipation or possible impaction after the procedure. Ensure your patient drinks plenty of fluids and eats foods high in fiber to expel the barium. Stools will be white or chalky.

The Results

A radiologist will analyze the images and send a signed report to the referring physician within 1 business day.

(Information adapted from Medline Plus and Dr. Paul Keller)

This manual is intended for use as merely a guideline for referring physicians and their staff only. It contains information pertaining to the most commonly ordered exams and indications. However, Iowa Radiology does not recommend any particular examination. Individual radiologist preference or patient circumstances may dictate ordering alternative studies. Although contrast codes are not needed to place an order, the following contrast codes may be used in placing orders: CT Contrast Q9967, MRI contrast A9577 and A9579.