

Barium Enema

You are scheduled to have a barium enema on: _____ **at:** _____ **am/pm.**

UW Hospital
600 Highland Ave

Take the Atrium elevators to 3rd floor
Check in at the G3/3 reception desk

UW Health Digestive Center
750 University Row
Madison, WI 53705

What is this test?

A barium and/or air enema (or lower GI series) is a test used to study the large bowel. X-rays are taken while contrast is put through the rectum and looked at as it moves through the entire colon until it reaches the small bowel. The test helps detect abnormal changes in the large bowel (colon). The enema, along with colonoscopy, remains standard in the diagnosis of colon cancer, ulcerative colitis, and other diseases of the colon.

What do I need to do to get ready for this test?

Your doctor's office will schedule this exam.

Tell your doctor and radiologist if you have:

- A chance of being pregnant
- A history of bowel problems
- A history of rectal surgery
- Severe or chronic constipation
- Other tests before your barium enema
- Kidney disease
- Heart problems
- Diabetes
- Chronic colitis

If you are taking medicines, check with your doctor or radiologist to find out if they should be taken within the 24 hours before the exam.

If you have any of these issues, you may need a different bowel prep.

Bowel Prep

For good results, you must have an empty bowel. To do this, you will follow a clear liquid diet and take laxatives. A few days before the test, go to your local drugstore and buy these over-the-counter bowel preps.

- 1 bottle of magnesium citrate 10 ounces (it is easier to drink chilled.)
- Bisacodyl tablets 20 mg

Day Before the Test

You will eat and drink **only** clear liquids the day before the test. Clear liquids include:

- Clear broth or consommé
- Juice without pulp: apple, grape, cranberry
- Boost Breeze®
- Coffee or tea, no creamer
- Water
- Clear Jell-O®, with nothing in it
- Popsicles
- Clear hard candy
- Gatorade®
- Sparkling water or soda

No juices with pulp (orange, tomato, prune juice, lemonade) or dairy products.

Be sure to drink 8 glasses (8-ounces each) of water, between noon and 11:00 pm, unless your fluid intake is restricted.

You may want to take these bowel preps earlier than the time listed below. **Do not**

take either of these at work and expect to travel home without needing a bathroom. These will cause you to have loose bowel movements.

- **5:30 pm:** Drink magnesium citrate 10 ounces.
- **8:00 pm:** Take bisacodyl tablets 20 mg. Do not chew or crush.

Have nothing to eat or drink after midnight, unless your doctor has told you to take pills with a sip of water.

If you are scheduled in the afternoon, you may have a liquid breakfast.

If you are still having solid stools the day of the test, please call (after 8 am) **608-263-9729, press #2**. Ask to talk to one of the techs to see if we can still do the exam.

Day of the Test

We will insert a small tube into your rectum to send contrast into your bowel. You may have cramps or feel like you need to have a bowel movement. Your doctor will watch your bowel as it fills with contrast on a screen. The lights will be dim so your doctor can see the screen. The whirring noise you hear is made by the x-ray machine.

The doctor may press on your abdomen to help spread the barium through your bowel. We will ask you will to turn from side to side so we can see different views of your bowel. The test will take 10- 20 minutes. We will ask you to wait while the doctor checks the x-rays. If the doctor wishes to look at part of your bowel from another angle, we will take more x-rays.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 1/2020 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#4366.

If you have a “double contrast study,” we coat the large bowel with barium and fill it with air to make it appear see-through on the x-ray. You may feel some cramping and fullness. We will ask you to roll on all sides and stand while the doctor takes x-rays. This test will take 20-40 minutes.

After the Test

The radiologist will review the images and write a report about the results by the end of the day. Your doctor or provider who ordered the test will talk to you about the results and make plans for further treatment.

You will have white colored bowel movements for a day or two. This is normal. Drink plenty of fluids to help move the barium out. You may need to take 2 tablespoons of Milk of Magnesia® to help you expel the contrast. Ask the doctor.

You may go back to your normal diet unless your doctor tells you something else.

Who to Call

If you have questions please call Radiology Scheduling at **(608-263-9729), press 2**.

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.