



# Barium Enema



## What is a barium enema?

A barium enema is a test that looks at your child's colon. The colon is also known as the large bowel or intestine.

A barium enema may be done for many reasons. It is most often done to find out why your child is having problems with bowel movements.

The test is done using X-rays and a contrast agent called barium. The barium is put into your child's rectum and can be seen on X-rays as it travels through your child's colon.

## How do I prepare my child for the test?

Your child's age, diagnosis or the reason for the test helps determine how you should prepare your child. Follow the instructions that you get when you schedule the test. Be sure to ask questions if there is anything that you don't understand.

If your child is allergic to barium, you will be given additional instructions.

Dress your child comfortably in clothes that are easy to take off. Your child will be given a gown to change into for the test.

## How do we check in for the appointment?

Arrive 30 minutes before your scheduled appointment. Being late can affect other appointments and can delay your appointment.

### To Learn More

- Radiology  
206-987-2089
- Ask your child's nurse  
or doctor
- [www.seattlechildrens.org](http://www.seattlechildrens.org)

### Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask  
your child's nurse.
- From outside the  
hospital, call the  
toll-free Family  
Interpreting Line  
1-866-583-1527.  
Tell the interpreter  
the name or extension  
you need.
- For Deaf and hard of  
hearing callers  
206-987-2280 (TTY)

Check in at the 4th floor registration desk inside the Whale entrance. After you complete registration, you will be directed to the Radiology reception area.

Upon arrival, females 12 years and older will be required to provide a urine sample for pregnancy screening.

If you will be late or have questions about testing, please call Radiology at 206-987-2089.

### What happens during the test?

The technologist will explain the test to both you and your child. We will insert a tube into your child's rectum to get the barium in your child's body. The length and width of the tube used depends on the age and size of your child. Once the tube is in your child, the technologist will use tape on your child's bottom so that the tube will stay in place during the test. The tube will be connected to a bag containing the barium.

A special doctor, called a radiologist, will move the X-ray camera over your child while the barium goes into their body. The camera will not touch your child. While the barium is flowing into your child's colon, the radiologist will roll your child from side to side in order to get good X-rays. The tube will be removed from your child's rectum, and your child will be able to go to the bathroom or can be put in a diaper until they have a bowel movement. After your child has a bowel movement, more pictures may be taken. The whole test takes about 45 minutes.

Parents may stay with their child during the test. Please make other arrangements for siblings. Women who are pregnant or may be pregnant will be asked to leave the room during the test. Please make sure to bring someone else with you who can stay with your child during the test, if needed.

### What happens after the test?

Give your child extra fluids after the test because the barium may cause constipation. Drinking extra fluids can help with constipation. If you have any problems or questions about constipation, call your primary healthcare provider.

When your child does have a bowel movement, it may look white or grayish. The barium can cause this discoloration.

### How do we get the results?

The X-rays from your child's test are reviewed within 24 hours, and a report will be sent to the doctor who ordered the test.