

Water soluble contrast enema

Radiology Department Patient information

Introduction

The Radiology (x-ray) Department has received a request for you to have a water-soluble contrast enema. This leaflet tells you about the examination. It explains what is involved and what the possible risks are. We will also send you an appointment letter with a date and time for your examination. Please make sure you check this to make sure you attend the correct hospital site.

What is a water soluble contrast enema?

A water soluble contrast enema is a type of x-ray examination that will allow us to examine your large bowel (colon). Your bowel does not show up well on ordinary x-ray images, however by using x-ray dye (contrast) we can see it. This test is often carried out after surgery to make sure the bowel has healed, or to check for narrowing or blockages of the bowel.

How can I prepare for the examination?

You do not need to do anything. You should eat and drink as normal.

If you have a stoma (opening onto the surface of the abdomen), you may want to bring a spare stoma bag with you just in case it's needed after the examination.

You should continue to take your prescribed medicines.

What will happen when I arrive for water soluble contrast enema?

You should go to the reception desk in the x-ray department to let them know you've arrived, after which you will be shown where to wait until collected by a member of staff. You will be taken to a private changing cubicle where you will be asked to change into a hospital gown. You will need to remove all clothing from below the waist. You will be provided with a gown and bag for your clothes; however you are welcome to bring your own gown and bag if you prefer.

Which hospital staff might I meet?

You will be cared for by a small team which may include a radiologist, an advanced practitioner radiographer, a radiographer, and a radiology assistant. Whoever is doing the examination will be watching an x-ray screen at the time and taking x-ray images. A radiologist or a trained advanced practitioner radiographer will then examine the record of the images before writing a report on their findings.

What happens during the examination?

You will go into the x-ray room and meet the staff who will look after you. They will explain the procedure and answer any questions you may have. They will also talk to you about the benefits and risks of the examination and ask if you have any allergies or have reacted badly to x-ray dye before.

If you are happy to have the examination, we will ask you to sign a form.

If you are aged between 10 and 55 years of age, we will ask you to complete a pregnancy form. This is because the test uses radiation, so we need to check if you might be pregnant before the examination.

You will be asked to lie on the x-ray table on your left side. A small soft plastic tube will then be passed into your back passage. Sometime a small balloon at the end of the tube is inflated to help the tube stay in the back passage. The tube is then used to introduce the x-ray dye (contrast) into your bowel. Once there is enough dye in your bowel, we will start taking x-ray images. This may involve you moving into different positions in order to get the best images. During the exam you will need to do your best to keep the dye in your bowel, however don't worry if some of it leaks out.

How long will it take?

This whole process should take about 20 minutes and after this you should be free to dress and leave the department.

After the examination

Once the radiologist is happy they have enough images, they will use the tube to drain as much of the dye out of the bowel as possible. The tube will then be gently removed.

Some of the dye will stay within your bowel, so you will be shown to a toilet outside the x-ray room where you will be able to expel any more before you leave. The dye is clear but slightly sticky. We can provide you with pad for your underwear if required.

After the examination you should be able to carry on as normal with work or other activities.

Will the examination be painful?

You may experience a little discomfort during insertion of the tube into the back passage. We will take care to minimise any discomfort to you.

Privacy and dignity

Sometimes tests can feel embarrassing and undignified, but we will try to do everything we can to make you as comfortable as possible during your examination.

Are there any risks or complications associated with this examination?

This is a safe examination. However as with any examination there are small risks. These are extremely rare.

Contrast: An allergic reaction to the x-ray dye is extremely rare. Please let us know if you have had an allergic reaction to x-ray contrast before. If you develop itching or difficulty breathing, tell your radiographer or doctor straight away.

Radiation: All x-ray procedures involve exposure to radiation in varying amounts. In all x-ray examinations the amount of radiation is kept to the smallest amount needed.

Bowel tear: There is a very rare risk that a small tear could be made in the wall of the bowel. We will take great care to avoid this happening. The risks are very much outweighed by the benefit of the examination. If this does happen it usually gets better by itself. If you need any immediate help then this will be arranged. The doctor who referred you would be informed and may want to follow up with you.

When will I get the results?

The x-rays will be examined after your visit and a written report on the findings sent to your referring doctor.

You should already have a follow up appointment with the team who referred you. If not, please contact them to arrange one so that you can discuss the results of this test.

What if I am, or think I am, pregnant?

This examination is not advisable if you are pregnant, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Please advise the department in advance if you think you are, or might be, pregnant.

Can I bring a relative/friend?

Yes - but for safety reasons they will not be allowed to enter the x-ray room with you, except in special circumstances.

Is there an alternative examination?

There may be alternative imaging available. However this has been considered to be the most appropriate test for you.

A water-soluble enema is the best examination to show leaks of the large bowel, especially following surgery.

and finally...

If you found reading this leaflet difficult and do not understand what it means for you, please contact us.

Some of your questions should have been answered by this leaflet, but remember that this is only a starting point for discussion about your treatment with the doctors looking after you. Make sure you are satisfied that you have received enough information about the procedure and please contact us with any queries or concerns.

Radiology contact:

Contact number: **0300 019 6792**, 9am-4pm, Monday to Friday

Or alternatively you can email us: **uhd.fluoroappointments@nhs.net**

We can supply this in other formats, in larger print, on audiotape, or have it translated for you. Please call the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on **0300 019 4886**, text or email **pals@uhd.nhs.uk** for further advice.

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The Royal Bournemouth Hospital, Castle Lane East, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH7 7DW
Poole Hospital, Longfleet Road, Poole, Dorset, BH15 2JB

Author: **Clare Robbin** Date: **May 2026** Version: **Two** Review date: **May 2029** Ref: **044/23**

t: 01202 665511 w: www.uhd.nhs.uk f: @UHTrust i: @uhd_nhs

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