



Preparing for a Contrast Enema

Your child's health and safety are important to us. You can make a difference in your child's care by asking questions and being actively involved.

What is a contrast enema?

Sometimes called a barium enema, a contrast enema is a fluoroscopy test that involves taking x-rays of the large bowel.

What happens during a contrast enema?

During a contrast enema, your child will be asked to lie on their side. The technologist will place a small, lubricated rubber enema tip into your child's rectum. The enema tip will be connected to a bag of clear contrast. The technologist will place tape around the tube and your child's rectum to hold it in place. The contrast will fill your child's large bowel while the technologist takes x-rays. Your child may be asked to move to different positions to help get clear x-rays. Once the x-rays are complete, the technologist will drain any loose contrast from your child's large bowel and remove the enema tip.

What do contrast enemas feel like?

The tip of the enema tip will have lubricant on it to help prevent discomfort. Your child may feel pressure as the enema tip enters their rectum. Once the contrast enters their large bowel, your child may feel full, or may experience cramping, or the need to go to the bathroom.

What can you do to prepare your child for a contrast enema?

Contrast enemas can sometimes feel uncomfortable. It is important to prepare your child before the exam, so they know what to expect. Let them know that the technologist will place the enema tip inside their rectum. A Child Life specialist may be available on the day of the exam to help your child cope. Be sure to follow any preparation instructions shared with you by your child's care team.

What should you expect after the procedure?

After the enema tip is removed and the contrast is drained from your child's large bowel, they will be able to use the bathroom. They will be asked to take a few more x-rays without the contrast. Your child may have loose or more frequent bowel movements after the test. Your child's care team will follow up after the test with the results.

Contact your child's care team if you have any questions about their contrast enema.