



**The Leeds  
Teaching Hospitals**  
NHS Trust

# Having a small bowel enema

Information for patients



**Leeds**  
Radiology

## **What is a small bowel enema?**

This is an x-ray examination of the small bowel. For us to do this it is necessary for you to follow the instructions in this leaflet very carefully as the bowel needs to be clear for us to obtain good results.

In the x-ray room a radiologist or an advanced radiographer practitioner will pass a small tube via your nose, into your stomach. Local anaesthetic gel will be applied to your nose to make the procedure more comfortable.

Once the tube is in the correct place some x-ray dye (barium) will be injected down the tube to fill your small bowel. During this time we will take x-rays of your abdomen. It will be necessary for us to press on your abdomen with a special glove, to help us visualise all of your small bowel.

By the time the examination has finished the liquid we have injected will be in your large bowel so we ask that you wait in the department for 30 minutes and to visit the toilet during this time to ensure you empty your bowel before you leave the department.

## **Who performs the test?**

The test is performed by a team of healthcare professionals which may include a radiographer, an advanced radiographer practitioner/specialist radiographer, an assistant and a radiologist.

## How do I prepare for the test?

Do not stop taking vital medicines (heart drugs, steroids, diuretics / water tablets etc.). In order to visualise the small bowel it is important that it is completely clean and empty. This is achieved by a special diet (see next page). Please follow the preparation instructions carefully as failure to do so may result in the test not working and you may have to be re-booked for another day.

### ***Important note for patients with diabetes:***

You should have an early morning appointment and bring your morning medication with you and a snack. Please telephone the department if you have not been given an early morning appointment or if you have not received a separate information sheet.

## The day before the examination

<b>1</b>	<b><i>Meals should be limited to small portions of any combination of any of the following:</i></b>	
<b>Breakfast Lunch and Tea</b>	White bread or toast, honey, seedless jam, boiled or poached egg, pasta (not wholemeal), boiled white rice	Chicken or fish (grilled, poached or steamed), tofu, clear soup, jelly.
<b>2</b> <b>Between meals and after tea</b>	<b><i>Drink as much clear liquid as possible:</i></b> Tea or coffee (without milk), water, squash, Bovril, Oxo, fizzy drinks (not diet/low calorie).	
<b>3</b> <b>From midnight</b>	<b>Nothing further to eat or drink after midnight.</b>	

## The day of the examination

Have nothing to eat or drink until after the examination.

### What should I bring with me?

You will be required to change into a gown for this examination. We will provide you with a gown, but you may wish to bring your own dressing gown. Please do not bring large sums of money or items of value with you. Unfortunately we are unable to provide any child care so please make alternative arrangements if necessary.

## **How long will I be in the department?**

Allow two hours for your examination. Although we try to keep to your appointment time, occasionally there may be a delay due to emergency patients.

## **Are there any side-effects?**

### ***Radiation***

This procedure involves x-rays. Female patients who are, or might be pregnant must inform a member of staff in advance.

The amount of radiation used is more than an ordinary x-ray of the chest or body and is equal to the natural radiation we receive from the atmosphere over a period of approximately two years. The risk from this radiation dose is very low.

### ***Allergic reaction***

Some patients may be allergic to the x-ray dye or medicines we give you. This is very rare. If you have any allergies please tell the member of staff who is performing your examination, at the start of the examination.

## **Do you ever fail to complete the examination?**

This is a safe examination that is usually successful. If, for any reason, we are unable to perform the examination we will inform your doctor who will discuss the alternatives with you.

Despite these small risks your doctor believes it is beneficial for you to have this examination. Do bear in mind that there are greater risks from missing a serious disorder by not having the examination.

## **How will I feel following the test?**

You may experience a little abdominal discomfort for a few hours after your test. This is normal and is due to the x-ray dye introduced into your small bowel during the examination. You will be able to eat and drink normally and recommend that you drink hot fluids (e.g. tea, coffee, peppermint tea) to settle stomach cramps. Drink plenty of fluids for the next day to keep you hydrated and to prevent constipation.

## **How do I get my results?**

You will not be given your results on the day. The results will be sent to your GP (if they referred you for the test. If so you must make an appointment to see them). If you have been referred by a hospital consultant / specialist then you will be sent an appointment to attend the relevant clinic or contacted by letter with the results.





## What did you think of your care?

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