

# Water Soluble Contrast Enema

## Introduction

This leaflet tells you about having the water-soluble contrast enema. This is an x-ray examination to look at problems within the large bowel using an iodine based x-ray dye (contrast). It is often carried out after surgery or to check for narrowing of the bowel for different reasons. It can also be carried out to confirm blockages of the bowel.

## What preparation is required?

No preparation is required before a water soluble enema. You can eat and drink as normal. If you have a stoma (opening onto the surface of the abdomen) please bring a spare stoma bag with you just in case one is required after the examination.

## Persons of child bearing age

When pregnant, if possible, you should not have an x-ray test as there is a small risk that x-rays may cause an abnormality to the unborn child. This is why you are asked before having an x-ray if you are pregnant. Please advise us in advance on **01392 402336**, option 1 and option 6 if you are, or think you might be pregnant.

## Can I bring a relative or a friend?

Yes but for safety reasons they will not be able to accompany you into the x-ray room.

## What happens when I arrive?

Please register at the reception desk, you will then be directed to the fluoroscopy department of Medical Imaging. You will need to undress so will be shown to a private cubicle where you will be provided with a gown to change into.

## What will happen during the examination?

Your verbal consent will be gained prior to commencing the examination.

You will be asked to lie on the x-ray table on your left hand side whilst the doctor passes a small, soft plastic tube into your back passage. This tube is then used to introduce a water soluble x-ray dye into your bowel. Once there is enough fluid in your bowel we will start taking x-rays and this may involve you lying in various positions in order to get the best image possible.

## What happens afterwards?

At the end of the examination we will drain out as much of the fluid as we can. Some of it 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 most of it before you leave the department.

If you have a stoma bag some of the dye may collect in there, it is clear and sticky.

Once all the liquid has been evacuated there should be no after effects following this procedure.

After the examination you can eat and drink normally.

## How long will it take?

The whole examination will take approximately 20 minutes.

## Are there any risks or complications associated with this examination?

A water soluble enema is a safe examination. However, as with any examination there are small risks although these are extremely rare. When the soft tube is inserted it may cause the rectum (back passage) to tear slightly. A small injury of this nature will usually resolve itself. There is also a very rare risk that your bowel could perforate (a small tear could be made in the wall of the bowel). The doctor will take great care to avoid this happening and the risks are very much outweighed by the benefit of the examination.

An allergic reaction to the x-ray dye is extremely rare.

As with all x-ray examinations, we endeavour to keep the exposure to radiation to the absolute minimum.

## Will the examination be painful?

You may experience a little discomfort during tube insertion into the back passage. If you have an ileostomy (opening onto the abdominal wall) you may feel some discomfort when we fill your bowel with the dye. This is due to the stretching of the tissue after weeks or months of non-use. The doctor will take every care to minimise any discomfort for you.

## Is there an alternative examination?

A water soluble enema is the only examination to show leaks in the large bowel following surgery. You may have other tests to look inside the large bowel such as Sigmoidoscopy or Colonoscopy. All these tests complement each other allowing the doctor to best plan your treatment.

## Privacy and dignity

Sometimes tests, although necessary, can be embarrassing or undignified for patients but we will endeavour to do everything we can to make you as comfortable as possible during your visit to the department.

## Contact us

If you found reading your leaflet difficult, you do not understand what it means for you, if you have any queries or concerns you can contact us on: **01392 402336** and we can talk it through.

## How to get to the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital at Wonford

Please refer to the enclosed "**Welcome to the Medical Imaging Department**" leaflet and use the Trusts website for the latest information:

**[www.rdehospital.nhs.uk/our-sites](http://www.rdehospital.nhs.uk/our-sites)**

For more information on the Medical Imaging Department, please visit our website:

**[www.rdehospital.nhs.uk/services/medical-imaging-radiology-x-ray](http://www.rdehospital.nhs.uk/services/medical-imaging-radiology-x-ray)**

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