Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Contrast Enema

This information will help you get ready for your contrast enema at MSK. It also explains what to expect during and after your contrast enema.

A contrast enema is an X-ray imaging scan of your colon (large intestine). It's done with contrast, such as barium or an iodine solution called iohexol (Omnipaque®), air, or a combination of these. The contrast makes your colon easier to see on the X-ray images.

Before your procedure

Most people need to clean out their colon (do a bowel preparation) before their contrast enema. Talk with your healthcare provider before your procedure to confirm what kind of preparation you must do.

If you're an inpatient (admitted to the hospital): Before your contrast enema, a nurse will give you the supplies you need for your bowel preparation.

If you're coming to the hospital for your contrast enema: Talk with your healthcare provider about your bowel preparation. Most people will need to buy the following supplies a few days ahead of time:

- Polyethylene glycol (MiraLAX®). You'll need 1 (238-gram) bottle.
- A light-colored (not red or purple) sports drink (such as Gatorade®). You'll need 2 (32-ounce) bottles.
- Bisacodyl (Dulcolax®). You'll need 4 (5 mg) tablets.

The day before your procedure

Follow a clear liquid diet

Follow a clear liquid diet the day before your procedure. A clear liquid diet includes only liquids you can see through. Examples are listed in the "Clear liquid diet" table. While you're following this diet:

- Do not eat any solid foods.
- Try to drink at least 1 (8-ounce) glass of water every hour while you're awake.
- Drink different types of clear liquids. Do not just drink water, coffee, and tea.
- Do not drink any red or purple liquids.
- Do not drink sugar-free liquids unless you have diabetes and your care team tells you to do so.

For people with diabetes

If you have diabetes, ask the healthcare provider who manages your diabetes what you should do while you're following a clear liquid diet.

- If you take insulin or another medicine for diabetes, ask if you need to change the dose.
- Ask if you should drink sugar-free clear liquids.

While you're following a clear liquid diet, make sure to check your blood sugar level often. If you have any questions, talk with your healthcare provider.

Clear liquid diet		
	OK to have	**Do not have**
Soups	• Clear broth, bouillon, and consommé.	• Anything with pieces of dried food or seasoning.

Sweets	• Gelatin, such as Jell-O®. • Flavored ices. • Hard candies, such as Life Savers®, lemon drops, and peppermints.	• Red or purple sweets. • All other sweets.
Drinks	• Clear fruit juices, such as lemonade, apple, white cranberry, and white grape juices. • Soda, such as ginger ale, 7UP®, Sprite®, and seltzer. • Sports drinks, such as Gatorade® and Powerade®. • Black coffee or plain tea without any type of milk or creamer. • Water, including carbonated (fizzy) and flavored water. • Clear nutritional drinks, such as Boost® Breeze, Ensure Clear™, Pedialyte®, and Diabetishield®.	• Red or purple drinks. • Juices with pulp. • Nectars. • Smoothies or shakes. • Milk, cream, and other dairy products. • Nut milks, plant milks, non-dairy creamers, and other dairy alternatives. • Drinks with alcohol.

Instructions for your bowel prep

At 3 p.m., take 2 Dulcolax tablets.

At 5 p.m.:

1. Divide the MiraLAX in half. Pour half of the MiraLAX into each 32-ounce bottle of Gatorade.
2. Shake the bottles until the MiraLax is fully dissolved.
3. Drink 1 (8-ounce glass) of the mixture every 30 minutes until both bottles are empty.

At 7 p.m., take the last 2 Dulcolax tablets.

Instructions for eating

Important: If you take a GLP-1 medicine, do not follow these instructions. Follow the instructions in *Eating and Drinking Before Your Surgery or Procedure When Taking GLP-1 Medicines* (www.mskcc.org/pe/eat-drink-glp1) instead.



Stop eating at midnight (12 a.m.) the night before your surgery or procedure. This includes hard candy and gum.

Your healthcare provider may have given you different instructions for when to stop eating. If so, follow their instructions. Some people need to fast (not eat) for longer before their surgery or procedure.

The day of your procedure

Take only the medicines your doctor told you to take the morning of your procedure. Take them with a few sips of water.

Instructions for drinking

Important: If you take a GLP-1 medicine, do not follow these instructions. Follow the instructions in *Eating and Drinking Before Your Surgery or Procedure When Taking GLP-1 Medicines* (www.mskcc.org/pe/eat-drink-glp1) instead.

Between midnight (12 a.m.) and 2 hours before your arrival time, only drink the liquids on the list below. Do not eat or drink anything else. Stop drinking 2 hours before your arrival time.

- Water.
- Clear apple juice, clear grape juice, or clear cranberry juice.
- Gatorade or Powerade.
- Black coffee or plain tea. It's OK to add sugar. Do not add anything else.

- Do not add any amount of any type of milk or creamer. This includes plant-based milks and creamers.
- Do not add flavored syrup.

If you have diabetes, pay attention to the amount of sugar in your drinks. It's easier to control your blood sugar levels if you include sugar-free, low-sugar, or no added sugar versions of these drinks.

It's helpful to stay hydrated before surgeries and procedures, so drink if you're thirsty. Do not drink more than you need. You'll get intravenous (IV) fluids during your surgery or procedure.



Stop drinking 2 hours before your arrival time. This includes water.

Your healthcare provider may have given you different instructions for when to stop drinking. If so, follow their instructions.

What to bring

- A list of the medicines you take at home. Include prescription and over-the-counter medicine, patches, and creams.
- Medicines for breathing problems (such as an inhaler), if you take any.
- Medicines for chest pain, if you take any.
- If you have an ostomy, bring an extra bag and supplies with you.

Where to go

Your contrast enema will be done at Memorial Hospital, MSK's main building. Visit www.msk.org/parking for parking information and directions to all MSK locations.

Enter through the entrance at 425 E. 67th St. and take the A elevator to the 2nd floor.

What to expect

Once you're at the hospital, doctors, nurses, and other staff members will ask you to say and spell your name and date of birth many times. This is for your safety. People with the same or similar name may be having procedures on the same day.

A radiologic technologist performs medical exams using X-rays to create images of specific parts of the body. A radiologist is a doctor who specializes in medical imaging. After you change into a hospital gown, your radiologic technologist and radiologist will talk with you about the procedure and answer your questions. Then, they will help you onto an X-ray table. You will lie flat on your back.

First, you will have an X-ray of your abdomen (belly) to make sure there is no stool (poop) in your colon. Then, your radiologist will put a small tube into your rectum. The contrast will flow gently through the tube and into your colon. You may feel some cramping while this is happening.

Your radiologist will watch the contrast move through your colon on a screen. They will take X-rays at different times. They might tilt the head of the X-ray table higher or lower, help you move into different positions, or both. This is so the contrast will cover your entire colon.

Next, your radiologic technologist will take the tube out of your rectum. They'll show you where the bathroom is so you can expel the contrast and air into the toilet. After you expel the contrast, 1 or more X-rays will be taken.

You'll wait in the X-ray exam room while your radiologist reviews the X-rays. Once they have, you can leave.

After your procedure

You can go back to your usual diet and activities, unless your doctor or nurse gives you other instructions.

If you had a barium enema, your stool will be white for a few days after your procedure. Your body is still getting rid of the barium. It's important to drink

extra liquids to help move it out of your colon.

Sometimes, barium can cause constipation. Your stool should return to its normal color a few days after your barium enema. If it has not, ask your doctor if you should take a laxative or use an over-the-counter enema. Some people need a laxative (such as milk of magnesia) or an over-the-counter enema to remove all of the barium.

Your results will be available from your doctor in 2 business days. You can see your results on your MSK MyChart (MSK's patient portal) account.

Contact information

If you have any questions about your contrast enema, call 212-639-7298. Ask to talk with a member of your care team at the Department of Radiology. You can reach them Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

After 8 p.m., during the weekend, and on holidays, call 212-639-2000 and ask for the doctor on call for your doctor.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Contrast Enema - Last updated on June 6, 2024
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