



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 need to do.

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

If you'll be 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. Don't 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 a member of your healthcare 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 medication 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		
	Drink	Do Not Drink
Soups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear broth, bouillon, or consommé	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Any products with pieces of dried food or seasoning
Sweets	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gelatin (such as Jell-O®)• Flavored ices• Hard candies (such as Life Savers®)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All others• Red or purple sweets
Drinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear fruit juices (such as lemonade, apple, white cranberry, and white grape juices)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Juices with pulp• Nectars• Milk or cream• Alcoholic drinks

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soda (such as ginger ale, 7-Up®, Sprite®, and seltzer) • Sports drinks (such as Gatorade) • Black coffee • Tea • Water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red or purple drinks
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Instructions for your bowel preparation

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 drinking: 8 hours before your arrival time

8 hours before your arrival time, do not eat or drink anything except these clear liquids:

- Water.
- Soda.

- Clear juices, such as lemonade, apple, and cranberry juices. Do not drink orange juice or juices with pulp.
- Black coffee or tea (without any type of milk or creamer).
- Sports drinks, such as Gatorade®.
- Gelatin, such as Jell-O®.

You can keep having these until 2 hours before your arrival time.

The day of your procedure

Remember, starting 8 hours before your scheduled arrival time, do not eat or drink anything except the things listed earlier.

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

Instructions for drinking: 2 hours before your arrival time



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

What to bring

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

Where to park

MSK's parking garage is on East 66th Street between York and 1st avenues. If you have questions about prices, call 212-639-2338.

To get to the garage, turn onto East 66th Street from York Avenue. The garage is about a quarter of a block in from York Avenue. It's on the right (north) side of the street. There's a tunnel you can walk through that connects the garage to the hospital.

There are other parking garages on:

- East 69th Street between 1st and 2nd avenues.
- East 67th Street between York and 1st avenues.
- East 65th Street between 1st and 2nd avenues.

Where to go

Your contrast enema will be done at Memorial Hospital, MSK's main building. Enter through the entrance at 425 East 67th Street 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.

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 isn't any 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 as your body gets rid of the barium. It's important to drink extra liquids to help move it out of your colon.

Sometimes, barium can cause constipation. If your stool hasn't returned to its normal color a few days after your barium enema, 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 MyMSK (MSK patient portal) account.

Contact information

If you have any questions about your contrast enema, call 212-639-7298 to talk with a member of your healthcare 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 April 8, 2024

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