



## **PATIENT INFORMATION**

# **Small Bowel Enema**

### **The Radiology Department**

This is sometimes called the X Ray or Imaging Department. We carry out examinations of patients using a range of X-Ray equipment, together with Computerised Tomography (CT scan), and ultrasound and Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)

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

This is a procedure to examine the small bowel, which is that part of the intestine that joins the stomach to the large bowel (colon).

In order to see the small bowel on the X-Ray screen we coat it with fluid called barium. The whole procedure lasts approximately 45 - 60 minutes but you will need to allow extra time for parking and changing into a hospital gown. Although this investigation is called an 'enema', the tube is actually passed into the small bowel from the **top** end i.e. via your nose.

### **Preparation before the enema**

So that we can view the small bowel clearly, it is important to empty it as much as possible. You will receive some laxatives called senna tablets with your appointment, which may make you go to the toilet frequently. If you have been diagnosed with **Crohn's disease** or have had a **colectomy** you might not need to take these, please contact the department to check. Your letter will explain what to eat and drink on the day **before** and the day **of** your appointment.

### **If you are pregnant**

This examination is not advisable for pregnant women, unless there are exceptional circumstances. If there is any possibility at all that you may be pregnant please contact this department prior to your appointment.

### **Can I bring a relative or friend?**

Yes, but for reasons of safety, they may not be able to accompany you into the X-Ray room, except in very special circumstances.

### **Are there any risks?**

An X-Ray examination of the small bowel does carry certain risks. The duration and level of X-Rays are kept to a minimum, but during this investigation, you will probably be

exposed to a quantity of radiation, equivalent to the amount that we all receive naturally from the atmosphere, over a period of approximately 3 years.

### **Who will I see during the examination?**

You will be cared for by a small team which may include a Consultant, Radiologist, a radiographer, a trained nurse and a radiology assistant.

### **What happens during the small bowel enema investigation?**

You will be shown to a private cubicle where you may undress and remove jewellery and watches etc., you will be given a gown to wear.

The Consultant Radiologist is a doctor specialising in X-Ray procedures, and will begin by introducing some local anaesthetic into your nose and spraying the back of your throat. This may taste unpleasant for a short while, but is intended to help the passage of a long thin tube into your nose and down through to your stomach. You can help this yourself by actually swallowing the tube. You may find this uncomfortable at first but it settles down in a short while.

If you are not already lying down at this point the Radiologist will ask you to do so, so that the tube can be placed into the correct position. This can take a little while to achieve. Once that is in place, barium is run into the tube, followed by another liquid called methylcellulose to push the barium along. This sometimes makes you feel full and bloated.

When all necessary pictures have been taken, the tube is removed.

### **Afterwards**

We will offer you a drink and a place to sit until you feel ready to dress and go. You may feel a little unsteady or nauseous, so it is better if someone accompanies you home, if possible.

We advise you to drink plenty of fluids to flush away the barium and you may continue with your usual diet. Your motions may appear whitish for a day or two but this is quite normal. The images will be further examined by the radiologist who will then write a report on the findings. This will be sent to your referring doctor, normally within 7-10 days.

**If you require any further information, please contact the  
X-Ray Department on 01803 655657**

This leaflet has been prepared using recommendations from the  
Royal College of Radiologists.