

Your child's water-soluble contrast enema

The aim of this leaflet is to help answer some of the questions you may have about your child having a water-soluble contrast enema. It explains the benefits, risks and alternatives of the procedure as well as what you can expect when you come to the Evelina London Children's Hospital (ELCH). If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to a doctor, radiographer or nurse caring for your child.

What is a water-soluble contrast enema?

A water-soluble contrast enema is an examination of the large intestine using X-rays and a liquid (the 'contrast') that is easily identifiable on the X-ray images.

The procedure is carried out by both a radiologist (a doctor who uses X-rays to diagnose and treat illnesses) and a radiographer (a health professional that produces the images used to diagnose and treat illnesses).

The procedure is called 'fluoroscopic imaging' or 'fluoroscopy' and uses X-rays to view images in real time. When the bowel is coated with the contrast, the radiologist is able to check how it looks and how well it is working.

Why should my child have a water-soluble contrast enema?

Fluoroscopy makes it possible to see internal organs in motion and so can provide information that will help the doctor to make a correct diagnosis or decision about your child's treatment.

What are the risks?

All x-ray examinations involve exposure to radiation in varying amounts. The length of time and level of exposure to radiation from X-rays in medical examinations is strictly controlled and kept to the minimum level that is possible. The doses that are used in medical X-rays are very low and are thought to be very safe. They are similar in strength to other sources of natural radiation that people are exposed to every day, like radiation from the sun and other stars.

The examination takes place in our children's fluoroscopy room that is specifically designed for children and young people, and offers very low dose radiation imaging.

Are there any alternatives?

This depends on what your child is being examined for. The team looking after your child will assess which method of examination is most appropriate. Each request is also carefully assessed by the imaging team to ensure the most appropriate examination is carried out. If you have any questions please speak to the team who referred your child.

How can my child prepare for a water-soluble contrast enema?

It is important that your child's stomach is empty for this examination. Therefore we ask that you do not feed your child before the appointment, for the times stated below.

Under one year old: Preferably no food or drink for at least **one hour** before the appointment.

One to five years old: No food or drink for **two hours** before the appointment.

Five years and over: No food or drink for **four hours** before the appointment.

Your child may be required to take bowel-cleansing medication before the water-soluble enema, to allow the team to see the bowel more clearly. The doctor referring your child for the test will advise you on this.

Metal objects can affect the image, so please avoid dressing your child in clothing with poppers or zips. No other special preparation is required.

Older children may be asked to wear a hospital gown during the exam and to remove jewellery, glasses and any clothing that contains metal.

We have a selection of DVDs to help distract your child during the examination. Or you can bring a favourite toy with you, or they may prefer to watch something on your phone or tablet. There is poor signal in the room and so it's best to download content beforehand.

If your child has a gastrostomy or a PEG tube, please bring the connector with you. If they have a stoma bag, please bring a spare one with you.

Consent - asking for your consent

We want to involve you in all the decisions about your child's care and treatment. You will be asked if you consent to the procedure when you are called into the fluoroscopy room. If you do consent, this verbally confirms that you agree to your child having the examination and that you understand what it involves.

If you would like more information about our consent process, please speak to a member of staff caring for your child. If on the day of the test you still have questions or concerns, please ask the radiographer and/or the radiologist who is going to do the examination.

Who can I expect in the room?

During the examination there will be a radiologist and a radiographer in the room. Sometimes a nurse can also be present, as well as a play specialist, which may be helpful for your child and the examination being performed.

What happens before a water-soluble contrast enema?

As the imaging involves the use of X-rays, we legally have to ask anyone with child bearing potential over the age of 12 whether there is any chance they could be pregnant. To do this we will provide a simple question sheet when you book in at the imaging reception. This will be checked by the radiographer undertaking the examination.

What happens during a water-soluble contrast enema?

The examination takes place in our children's fluoroscopy room that is located in the Children's Imaging Department. A water-soluble contrast enema involves passing a soft flexible tube into the back passage (rectum). This will be done carefully and it may cause discomfort but it is usually not painful. The large intestine is then filled via the tube with a fluid (the contrast dye) that is visible on the X-ray images.

A number of X-rays will then be taken as the contrast flows around the large intestine. The radiographer will explain what will happen during the examination and then help your child into whichever position is best for the imaging.

As a parent or carer you may be asked by the radiographer to support or hold your child in a particular position (this depends on their age). If this assistance is required, you will be asked to wear a lead coat to protect you from the radiation. If there is any chance that you could be pregnant, please notify the radiographer before the examination begins. If you are pregnant, we advise you to bring another family member with you to act as a supporter.

Although the examination itself usually only takes about 25 minutes, **please allow up to one hour** for everything to be completed, as sometimes we need to wait longer for the contrast to move through your child's large intestine for the final pictures.

Will my child feel any pain?

Your child may feel some discomfort when the tube is inserted into their back passage (rectum). We will use a lubricant gel to reduce discomfort when inserting the tube. It can also feel quite strange as the contrast passes around their large intestine, but this should not be painful.

What happens after the procedure?

Your child is likely to want to use the toilet for a time after the examination to pass the contrast. There are toilet facilities very close to the fluoroscopy room where the examination will take place. You are free to leave after the examination.

What does my child need to do after we go home?

Following the procedure, resume your child's usual diet.

Will I have a follow-up appointment?

Your child should already have an appointment with the team who referred them. If not, please contact them to arrange one to discuss the results of this test.

Contact us

Contact the Children's Imaging Department if you have any questions, **phone:** 020 7188 9218, or visit our website, **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk or www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets

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