Barium Enema

What is a large bowel Barium enema (Barium enema)?
A Barium enema is an x-ray examination of the large bowel. A liquid dye called Barium is given rectally.

How do I prepare for this examination?
A medication prescription, to prepare your bowel, shall accompany the appointment letter when sent in the post. This should be filled out and followed the day before arrival in the x-ray department. At 8am, the day before the examination, dissolve the contents of one of the PICOLAX sachets in a half a tumbler of water. Stir well and drink the mixture. You may then have a light breakfast, but no cereal. For the rest of the day, you should drink plenty of fluids e.g., tea, coffee (no milk), water and lucozade. No solids are allowed, although you may have clear soup and jelly. Between 2pm and 4pm, prepare and drink the second sachet of PICOLAX. On the morning of the examination, drink clear fluids only.

Can I take my usual medication?
Yes, however, diabetics who are fasting are advised to alter their insulin intake appropriately.

What will happen during the examination?
A radiologist and a radiographer will be present in the x-ray room. You will be asked to lie on their left side on the x-ray table. The radiologist will place a soft tube into your back passage and fill the bowel with a white fluid called Barium. The fluid is a dye which outlines the bowel, the radiologist will watch this on a special x-ray television screen. Periodically, the radiologist will ask you to change position or hold your breath so that "snapshots" or spot films may be taken. At the end of the examination, the radiographer will take a few more x-rays. The tube will then be removed and you will be brought to the bathroom immediately.

Will it hurt?
It will be mildly to moderately uncomfortable and there may be some cramping. The radiologist may give the patient an injection to relax the bowel.

How long will the examination take?
The examination typically takes 30 minutes to complete. However, this depends on how quickly the dye passes through the bowel and later x-rays may be required.

When may I eat?
You may eat as soon as the examination is over. You should eat plenty of fruit and vegetables and drink extra fluids, to remove any left over barium from the bowel.

How will I learn the results?
The results will be sent to your doctor who will discuss the results with you.