

Barium appendicitis

A 57-year-old man presented with lower abdominal pain and diarrhoea. Clinically there was evidence of localized peritonitis in the lower abdomen. A plain film of the abdomen showed normal bowel gas pattern and the presence of barium in the diverticula of the colon. In addition, the appendix was seen delineated with the barium and few filling defects caused by faecoliths (Figure 1).

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Figure 1. Barium-filled appendix.

He had had a barium enema examination 4 days previously for a recent change in bowel habits, which showed diverticular disease affecting the sigmoid colon. At operation, he had acute appendicitis with localized peritonitis. The patient made a

good recovery after the appendicectomy and peritoneal toilet.

The entity of 'barium appendicitis' has been widely debated. However, it has been suggested that in the presence of appendicoliths the barium could cause appendicitis (Ikehata et al, 1999). If appendicitis occurs following retained barium, it carries a higher risk of complications especially if there is a long interval between the barium examination and the onset of appendicitis (Cohen et al, 1987). **BJHM**

Cohen N, Modai D, Rosen A, Golik A, Weissgarten J (1987) Barium appendicitis: fact or fancy? Report of a case and review of the literature. *J Clin Gastroenterol* 9(4): 447-51
Ikehata A, Nakano Y, Sakuma T (1999) Acute appendicitis after barium enema examination. *J Clin Gastroenterol* 28(3): 280-1