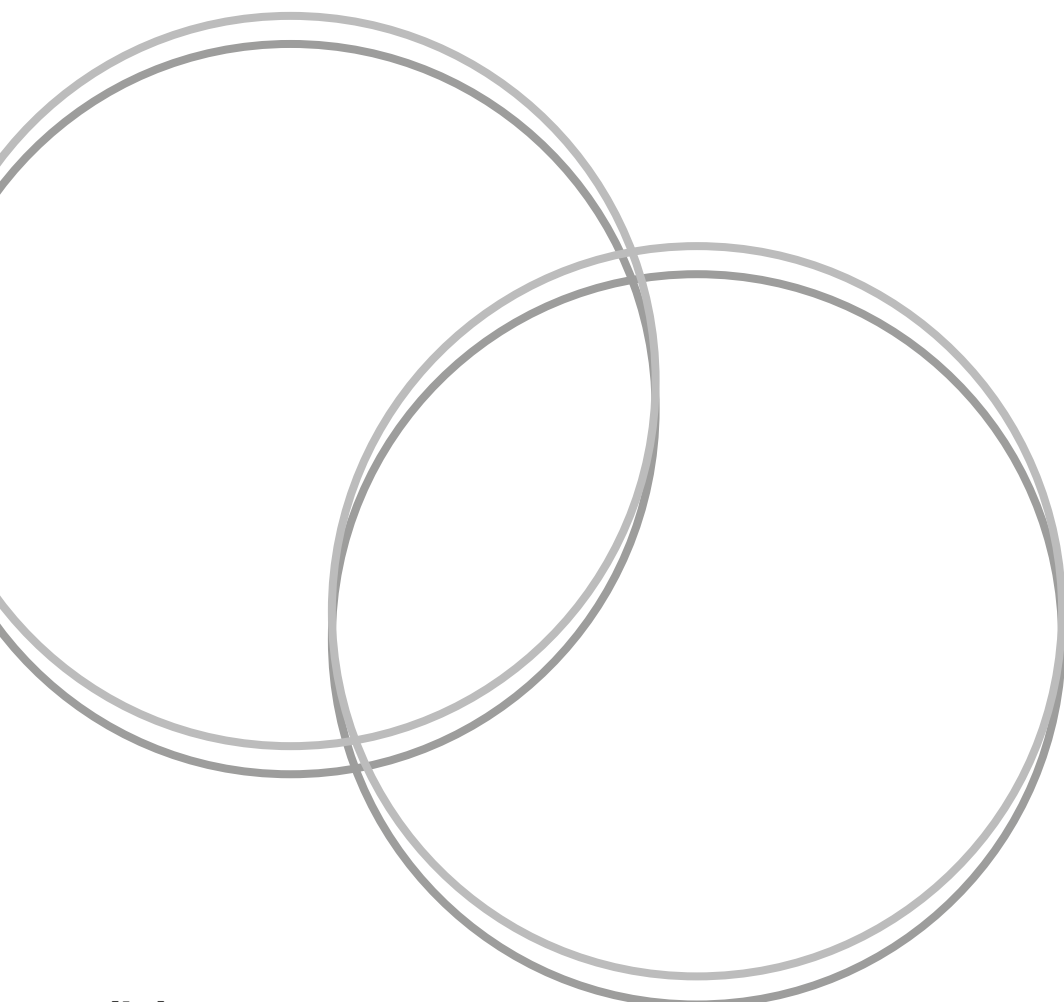




Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Proctogram examination

Information for patients



Radiology Department

Proctogram examination

The X-ray department has received a request for you to have a Proctogram examination. This leaflet tells you the purpose of the examination, what's involved and what the risks are. We will also send you an appointment letter which will tell you where to go for your appointment.

- If you cannot attend your appointment, please let us know **as soon as possible**. Please telephone us on the number on the front of your appointment letter.
- For people between the ages of 12-55 years it is important to carry out this examination within 10 days of the start of your menstrual cycle (period). This is because the examination should usually be performed when we can be sure that you are not pregnant. If the appointment date does not fall within this time please telephone for another appointment. (If you are using contraception i.e.: pill, injection or the coil which is within its recommended dates or not missed a pill dose, this is sufficient for the pregnancy form).
- **BEFORE YOUR APPOINTMENT:** This examination may be carried out by a male practitioner. If you would prefer a female practitioner, please phone us in advance (number on the top of the appointment letter) and we will try to accommodate this (note: your appointment date and time may need to be changed)
- If you weigh more than 196kg or 31 stone, please tell us immediately.

If you need hospital transport to reach the hospital, please arrange this with your GP prior to the appointment.

You can contact us on: **01865 228 944**
(9.30a.m–4.30p.m, Monday to Friday)

Contact details are also on the front of your appointment letter.

What is a Proctogram examination?

This is an X-ray examination which produces a series of images which show how your bottom functions during emptying of your bowels. The purpose of the test is to try to find out what may be causing your symptoms (e.g. incontinence or difficulty in passing stool).

Can I bring a relative or friend?

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

Are there any risks?

- Exposure to radiation: This is a low dose examination and the amount of radiation is kept to a minimum. This is equivalent to the amount of background radiation that you naturally receive over 3-5 months.
- There is a very small risk (1 in 2000 patients) of a small tear in the lining of the rectum. This usually occurs only if the bowel is severely inflamed.

Your doctor has recommended this examination because they feel that the benefits are greater than the risk of not having the examination. Even so, this test cannot be guaranteed to detect all abnormalities in the back passage.

What happens at home before the examination?

There is no additional preparation or special dietary requirements needed before the examination.

What happens during the examination?

The procedure usually lasts about 2 hours but you may be at the hospital longer if we need to see emergency patients.

You will be asked to drink a quantity of contrast an hour and a half (90 minutes) before the examination. There is a choice of drinks (omnipaque and Barium), one that can potentially cause loose stools, and one that may cause constipation (more likely to happen if you suffer with this complaint). The contrast shows up on the X-ray and allows us to see your small bowel during the examination which gives us more information for your report.

You will be asked to change into a hospital gown to make sure that no metal coins/objects are seen on the pictures.

When entering the x-ray room, you will be asked to lie onto a couch so that we can insert some barium paste (similar consistency to soft stool) into your back passage (rectum) using a soft tube, so we can highlight your lower bowel. If you are female, we may insert a small amount of dye into your vagina which highlights this area on X-ray and allows us to see everything in more detail.

Once the dye and paste have been inserted, we will ask you to briefly move and sit upon a specially designed commode (like a toilet) surrounded by a modesty curtain.

Once you feel comfortable, a low dose X-ray is taken in three stages. First, images are taken at rest and when you are squeezing hold of the barium in your bowel. Finally we will ask you to empty your bowels.

We fully appreciate that this procedure requires privacy and we will make every effort to make you feel relaxed and comfortable.

Will it be uncomfortable/painful?

You should not feel any pain and, apart from having to remain still for a short while, you should experience no discomfort.

Side effects and what happens after the examination?

- If you have been given the Barium drink: Drink plenty of fluids (several glasses of fluid, ideally water each day to quench thirst). The barium will make your motions whitish for the next few days and can constipate you. Therefore, keep drinking extra until your stools are no longer whiter than your normal. It is important to wash away the barium inside your bowel so that it does not harden inside you and cause constipation.
- Eating a high fibre diet like bran or wholemeal bread can help but the main thing is to drink plenty of fluids.
- If you have problems with your heart or water retention, you may not be able to drink this much safely. If in doubt or you find you become breathless or your legs swell up, contact your GP.
- If you have been given the Omnipaque drink: this may result in loose stools/some diarrhoea for a short while.
- The dye in your vagina will come out naturally so you may want to wear sanitary pads until this passes. It will look like a clear discharge.

When and how will I know the result of the examination?

The pictures of your bowel will be examined by a specialist radiographer and consultant radiologist, who will then send a report of the results to the person who referred you.

The result will be sent out to the doctor/consultant from the outpatient department who referred you and will be there in time for your next outpatient appointment.

Questions or concerns

If you have any questions you can telephone us on the number on the front of your appointment letter.

Further information

Further information can be found on the following websites:

www.rcr.ac.uk (Royal College of Radiologists)

radiopaedia.org/articles/evacuation-proctography?lang=gb

If you are unable to keep your appointment, please help us by contacting the Radiology appointments team as soon as possible. Your appointment slot can then be given to someone else, and you will be offered an alternative date and time.

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

Authors: Carol Picking, Gastrointestinal Advanced Practitioner
Michael North, Consultant Gastrointestinal Radiographer

September 2026

Review: September 2029

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
www.ouh.nhs.uk/information



Making a difference across our hospitals

charity@ouh.nhs.uk | 01865 743 444 | hospitalcharity.co.uk

OXFORD HOSPITALS CHARITY (REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1175809)

