

Radiology Department

Proctogram examination

Information for patients



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.
- If you are female and of childbearing age, i.e. up to 55 years of age, we will ask you to complete a form asking about the dates of your periods. (You may already have done this.) This is because the examination should usually only be performed when we can be sure that you are not pregnant. Please complete and return this form as soon as possible so that we can give you an appropriate appointment date.
- If you weigh more than 146 kg or 23 stone, please tell us immediately.

If you need hospital transport to reach the hospital, please tell us as soon as possible.

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 weeks.
- 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 patient also has severe bowel inflammation.

Your doctor has recommended this examination because he/she feels 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 some special liquid called barium for an hour and a half before the examination. The barium shows up on the X-ray and allows us to see your small bowel during the examination.

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

When you are ready, a radiographer and doctor/specialist radiographer will enter the cubicle and you will be asked to lie on your side on the couch provided. Some Barium paste (similar consistency to toothpaste) will be inserted into your back passage using a soft tube. The Barium paste helps to highlight more of your lower bowel. If you are female, we may insert some dye into your vagina which highlights this area on X-ray and allows us to see everything in more detail.

We will then take you into the X-ray room where we will ask you to sit on 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, an image is taken at rest. Then we will ask you to squeeze hold of the barium in the bottom. 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?

- Drink plenty of fluids (several glasses of 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 or even block the toilet!
- 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.
- The dye in your vagina will come out naturally so you may want to wear sanitary pads for the next couple of days. It will look like a clear or whitish discharge.

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

The pictures of your bowel will be examined by the 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. If you do not yet have another outpatient appointment and do not hear anything within three weeks, you should telephone the consultant's secretary for advice.

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)

www.oxfordradcliffe.nhs.uk/forpatients/departments/departments.aspx

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221473**. When we receive your call we may transfer you to an interpreter. This can take some time, so please be patient.

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