Mersey and West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

Having a Proctogram

Patient information leaflet

If you need this leaflet in a different language or accessible format please speak to a member of staff who can arrange it for you.

اگر به این بروشور به زبان دیگر یا در قالب دسترس‌پذیر نیاز دارید،
لطفاً با یکی از کارکنان صحبت کنید تا آن را برای شما تهیه کند.

Jeśli niniejsza ulotka ma być dostępna w innym języku lub formacie,
proszę skontaktować się z członkiem personelu, który ją dla Państwa przygotuje.

Dacă aveți nevoie de această broșură într-o altă limbă sau într-un format accesibil,
vă rog să discutați cu un membru al personalului să se ocupe
de acest lucru pentru dumneavoastră

如果您需要本传单的其他语言版本或无障碍格式，请联系工作人员为您安排。

إذا احتجت إلى هذه النشرة بلغة أُخرى، أو بتنسيق
يسهل الوصول إليه، يرجى التحدث إلى أحد الموظفين لترتيب ذلك لك.

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Introduction

This leaflet aims to answer your questions about having a Proctogram. It explains the benefits, risks and alternatives, as well as what you can expect when you come to hospital. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is a Proctogram?

A proctogram is an x-ray examination which produces a series of images that demonstrates your bowel movements when you go to the toilet. The purpose of the test is to try to find out what may be causing your symptoms (for example, incontinence or difficulty in passing stool).

What happens during Proctogram examination?

A trained specialist called a radiographer will perform your proctogram examination.

- You will be asked to change into a hospital gown.
- You might be asked to remove certain items of clothing and jewellery.
- You will be asked to confirm some details including date of birth and pregnancy status.

You may be asked to drink a quantity of special liquid called barium for half an hour before the examination. The barium shows up on the x-ray and demonstrates if there is an enterocele prolapse (bulge) of the small bowel between your uterus and your rectum.

Once in the x-ray room the radiographer will ask you to lie on your left side. A small rectal tube will be inserted into your back passage and barium paste (of a similar consistency to toothpaste) will be passed into your rectum using a soft tube. The barium paste helps to highlight more of your lower bowel.

Once completed you will be asked to bear down and pass the barium paste while the x-ray images are being taken. We fully appreciate that this procedure requires privacy, and we will make every effort to make you feel relaxed and comfortable.

Why should I have a Proctogram?

Your doctor has referred you for this examination to help make a diagnosis or help with your treatment plans. It may be a follow-up examination or you may be having symptoms

Will I feel any pain?

This examination should be painless. If you are concerned please speak to the radiographers.

Additional information

How do I prepare for my Proctogram examination?

There is no additional preparation or special dietary requirements needed before the examination. When you arrive in the department you will be asked to go into a cubicle and change into a hospital gown and remove all your lower garments. You need to make sure that you are not wearing anything containing metal which would be visible on the images.
Do not worry if you have a metallic implant, such as a hip replacement. We can still perform the examination with this in place.

Clothes and accessories: There are some clothes that can affect the quality of the x-ray and you may be asked to remove them and wear a hospital gown.

Do I need to give my permission (consent)?

The radiographer will ask you if you are happy for the examination to go ahead. This is called verbal consent and might only involve the radiographer checking you are booked for the correct examination. If you do not wish to have the examination or are undecided, please ask the radiographer so that they can answer any questions you may have.

Remember, it is your decision. You can change your mind at any time and your wishes will be respected. However, not having the examination may delay your diagnosis as the referring clinician may not have all the needed information.

How long will it take?

Usually, the examination takes up to 1 hour, but you may be at the hospital longer if we need to see emergency patients around the same time. The images are recorded and the radiographer will check them briefly to make sure that they can be used to make a diagnosis. When it is completed, you will be allowed to leave the examination room. The radiographer will usually not be able to give you any idea of the results at that time.

What happens after a Proctogram examination?

As soon as the radiographer is satisfied that no more x-rays are needed, you will be free to leave the department. We advise you to drink plenty of fluids (several glasses of water each day to quench thirst). The barium will make your bowel motions white in colour for the next few days and may cause constipation. Therefore, keep drinking extra fluids until your stools are no longer whiter than normal.

It is important to wash away the barium inside your bowel so that it does not become hard inside you and cause constipation or even block your toilet! Eating a high fibre diet like bran or wholemeal bread can help, but the priority 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.

Risks

X-rays are of a type of radiation known as ionising radiation. The dose that you get from a medical x-ray is very low and the associated risks are minimal. The radiographer is responsible for making sure that your dose is kept as low as possible and that the benefits of having the examination outweigh any risk.

There are no risks associated with the barium liquid as it is not absorbed by the body. It only coats the walls of the oesophagus, stomach and bowel. For a small number of patients, there is a risk of aspiration (breathing in) of the contrast. This is unlikely but the risk increases for patients with known difficulties swallowing or a previous aspiration. In these cases a safer alternative contrast is used which is water soluble.

Pregnancy

If you are, or think you could be pregnant, please contact us prior to your appointment on the phone number in your appointment letter.

Are there any alternatives?

There may be other alternative imaging available. However, this has been considered to be the most appropriate test for you. If you have any questions please speak to the doctor that referred you or with the radiologist on the day of your examination.



Finally

The pictures taken during the examination are studied carefully and a detailed report is produced. The results will be sent to the person who referred you for the test. They will discuss the results with you and any treatment you may need.

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

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to call the Radiology Department via the number given on your appointment letter.

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As this is a teaching hospital there may be students and observers present during your examination as part of their ongoing training. Please let the staff know if you do not wish any students to be present during your attendance.

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