

## Information for Patients

# Proctogram

The x-ray department has received a request for you to have a proctogram examination. This leaflet explains the purpose of the examination, what's involved and what the risks are. We will also send you an appointment letter which will inform you where to attend for your appointment.

## What is a Proctogram examination?

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).

## 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.

## 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.

## Will I feel any pain?

You cannot feel the x-rays, so the procedure itself is painless.

However, it is important to get you into the correct position. Holding this position / lying on a table may, for some people, feel uncomfortable, but for the majority of patients this is not the case.

## Are there any risks with this examination?

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.

### Radiation risk

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.

The radiographer is responsible for making sure that your dose is kept as low as possible and that the benefits of having the x-ray outweigh any risk.

### Contrast risk

We will need to give you contrast dye to make areas of your body show up more clearly.

The radiographers will complete a checklist to ensure it is safe for you to have the dye and you will be asked to sign this form as a consent, the specific side effects are documented on the checklists that you complete.

The contrast dye that is sometimes used can cause allergic reactions however the staff available will be checking for any risks before we proceed.

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 your back passage

## Is there anything I need to inform you of before I attend for my 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 an individual of childbearing age, i.e. up to 55 years of age, we will ask you if there is any chance that you could be pregnant. This is because the examination should usually only be performed when we can be sure that you are not pregnant.

- If you weigh more than 200 kg or 31½ stone, please contact us as soon as possible as it may not be possible to perform this examination as this is the weight limit for the equipment.
- If you need hospital transport to reach the hospital, please tell us as soon as possible.

## 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.

You may also be asked to remove jewellery, dentures, glasses and any metal objects or clothing that might interfere with the x-ray images.

### **Help and support in the department**

If you have any medical problem which you feel may affect your safety in the department, or if you feel you may need any assistance, please let us know when you arrive.

## 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 our GP.

## When will I get my results?

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 radiographer will tell you how to get your results and how long it will take, as this may be slightly different for each patient.

The result will be sent out to the doctor/consultant from the department who referred you and will be there in time for your next appointment. You may already have an appointment with the clinician who referred you. If not and you have not heard anything within three weeks, please contact them to arrange a time to talk about the results and any treatment you may need.

If you are staying in hospital, the results will be given to the doctors looking after you on the ward.

## What should I do if I have a problem?

You should not have any problems that is a result of the Proctogram examination.

If you feel your condition has changed, or you need further medical advice before receiving your results/after leaving the hospital, please make an appointment with the doctor that referred you, or in an emergency, go to your nearest Emergency Department (ED).

## How can I provide feedback for the appointment I have attended today?

The Division of Imaging welcomes feedback from all our patients. We actively take part in the Friends and Family Test, and we complete a patient experience questionnaire every month to obtain feedback on the experiences you have had. Please speak to a member of staff regarding the feedback or there are posters within the department with QR codes so you can complete these online.

## Contact us

For contact information please refer to your appointment letter or if you are an inpatient, please direct your queries to one of the medical staff on the ward.

Alternatively, you can contact us via email: [giradiographers@mft.nhs.uk](mailto:giradiographers@mft.nhs.uk)

### Language and accessible support services:

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch.

### Your comments and concerns

If you would like to provide feedback you can:

- Ask to speak to the department lead / manager.
- Write to us: Patient Advice and Liaison Services, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Cobbett House, Manchester Royal Infirmary, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9WL.
- Log onto the Patient Opinion website [www.patientopinion.org.uk/](http://www.patientopinion.org.uk/) click on 'Tell your Story'

### If you would like to discuss a concern or make a complaint:

Ask to speak to the department manager – they may be able to help straight away.

Inpatients can speak to a senior nurse or manager by contacting the Tell Us Today service on (0161) 701 1999.

Contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (0161) 276 8686 email: [pals@mft.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@mft.nhs.uk). Ask for our information leaflet.

We welcome your feedback so we can continue to improve our services.

### NHS 111

This service offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

Telephone: 111, 24 hours a day

Website: [www.111.nhs.uk](http://www.111.nhs.uk)

## Finally

Some of your questions should have been answered by this leaflet but remember that this is only a starting point for discussion about your treatment with the doctors looking after you. Further information can be obtained by contacting the radiology department that is performing the procedure.