



Royal Cornwall Hospitals
NHS Trust

Hysterosalpingogram (HSG)



One + all | we care

What is a hysterosalpingogram?

It is an X-ray examination of your uterus (womb) and fallopian tubes. X-ray contrast (dye) is injected into your uterus through a soft plastic tube which allows the inside of the uterus and the fallopian tubes to be seen on the X-ray pictures.

What is it for?

Your doctor may suggest this test if you are having trouble conceiving. Your doctor may also ask for this test to check if your operation for sterilisation has been successful.

Are there any alternatives?

The only alternative involves an operation called a laparoscopy.

What will happen if I don't have it?

It may be more difficult for your doctor to accurately diagnose the cause of your infertility.

How do I prepare for this examination?

As we are taking X-rays of your uterus it is extremely important to ensure that you are not pregnant at the time of the examination. This means we can only perform the procedure if:

- the appointment date falls within 28 days of the start of your last period, and you are not bleeding
- you have not been sexually active since the first day your last period.

If you do not meet one of these conditions, we will not be able to perform the test.

Who will I see?

A female team will carry out the examination and provide you with support throughout. A radiologist or advanced radiographer with specialist skills will perform the examination, assisted by a second radiographer and a clinical imaging assistant. The X-ray images taken will be reviewed later and a report written.

To allow us to focus on your care throughout the examination, accompanying partners are asked to remain in the waiting room for the duration of the test.

What will happen?

When you arrive in the department you will need to change into a gown. For your own comfort, you may prefer to bring your own dressing gown and slippers.

You will be taken into the X-ray room and asked to take off the dressing gown but keep on the hospital gown.

Before the examination starts you will be given some antibiotics to prevent pelvic infection. This will involve swallowing some tablets, and you must avoid alcohol for 48 hours afterwards.

You will be asked to lie on your back on the X-ray table and to bring your feet up into a 'frog leg' position. A speculum will be put into your vagina to see your cervix (similar to having a cervical smear test).

A thin plastic tube is then inserted into your uterus through your cervix. The contrast (dye) is then injected and X-ray pictures are taken. You may be asked to turn to the right and to the left, and to turn onto your tummy.

Will it be uncomfortable?

You may experience some cramping pains, similar to a period pain, but these should pass quickly. **We recommend that you take paracetamol or ibuprofen tablets in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions 30 minutes before your test.**

How long will it take?

The examination should take about 20 minutes, but you will probably be in the department for about 45 minutes.

What happens afterwards?

When we are sure that all the X-rays are satisfactory you will be able to leave the examination room and dress. We will ask you to stay in the department and rest for ten minutes.

Are there any after effects?

You will experience a sticky discharge as the dye is expelled from your uterus. We will provide you with a sanitary towel. You may also notice that the discharge is blood stained.

Are there any risks?

All X-ray procedures involve exposure to radiation in varying amounts, which may add very slightly to the risk of developing cancer.

The length and level of exposure to radiation from X-rays in medical procedures is strictly controlled and kept to the minimum possible. For a hysterosalpingogram, you will be exposed to radiation for several minutes.

This equals about the same amount of background radiation that you will receive naturally from the environment over 1 month.

There is an extremely small risk that this procedure may cause a pelvic infection, although this is minimised by taking antibiotics immediately before the test. If you experience any continuous bleeding or severe abdominal pains with a fever, contact your GP immediately.

There is also a very small risk of allergy to the X-ray dye. Please inform the X-ray department if you have had a serious reaction to X-ray dye in the past.

When will I get my results?

The person performing the test may be able to give you the results immediately afterwards. The report will be sent to the doctor who requested the examination as soon as possible.

About your consent

Before we carry out any examination or treatment we will need your permission - this is known as consent. Before the examination starts, we will explain what is involved and what we hope to gain from it. We will then ask for your consent to continue.

For some procedures it may be necessary to sign a consent form; if this is the case we will discuss it with you.

If you change your mind about having the examination or treatment, you can withdraw your consent at any time no matter how you gave it. Everything discussed between you and the member of staff will remain confidential.

If you would like more information about consent or confidentiality, please read our information leaflet outlining consent.

Further information

If you have any questions about the examination, or need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact us at the Radiography department on: 01872 252338.

If you need to change your appointment, contact the X-ray department clerk on:
01872 252290.

If you would like more information about fertility treatment, contact the Cornwall Centre for Reproductive Medicine on: 01872 253044.

If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690

