



Royal Cornwall Hospitals
NHS Trust

Dynamic rectal examination (proctogram)

Information for female patients



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What is a dynamic rectal examination?

A dynamic rectal examination involves obtaining real time images of some of the organs in your pelvis, including your small bowel, rectum and vagina, and looking at how they move when you go to the toilet. Barium is used to make these organs show up on the X-rays.

Why do I need it?

Your doctor has referred you for this examination as you are having trouble going to the toilet. The images obtained will help to diagnose the cause of your problems.

Are there any alternatives?

There are no alternatives to this examination.

How do I prepare for it?

You can carry on eating and drinking as normal as there are no dietary restrictions necessary before the examination.

What does it involve?

1. You will be asked to drink about three cups of barium (white chalky liquid) to outline your small bowel. As it takes about 45 minutes for the barium liquid to flow through the small bowel, there will be a short delay until the next part of the examination. During this time you are welcome to go out of the department for refreshments.
2. You will be asked to change into an X-ray gown. **For your comfort you may wish to bring your own dressing gown and slippers.**

3. You will be taken into the X-ray room and the radiographer will explain the procedure to you.
4. You will then turn on your left hand side and a small catheter will be placed in your back passage, through which a barium paste will be inserted.
5. You will be asked to insert some X-ray contrast into your vagina (similar to a tampon). This is to outline the vagina so it can be seen clearly on the X-ray images.
6. Images will be taken with you sitting on a specially designed commode and you will be asked to squeeze and strain your pelvic floor muscles. You will also be asked to evacuate the paste from your back passage.

Will I have any pain or discomfort?

The examination should not be painful but you may feel uncomfortable with some feelings of fullness as the paste is introduced.

Who will be involved?

A specialist radiographer and an assistant.

The staff involved all specialise in bowel imaging and understand the sensitive nature of this examination. They will make every effort to make you feel comfortable.

Please be assured that the examination will be carried out under strictly private conditions.

How long will the examination take?

The examination will take around 15 minutes,

but you can expect to be in the hospital for about one and a half hours.

Are there any risks?

There is a very small risk of making a perforation (tear) in your back passage, but this is extremely rare.

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.

What happens afterwards?

Following your examination you will be shown to the toilet. As there will be some barium paste remaining in your bowel your stools may be white for a few days.

Barium can be constipating so we recommend that you drink plenty of fluids afterwards and if necessary take a mild laxative.

When will I get my results?

You will not be told the results of the examination whilst you are in the department. We will review the X-ray images and send the result to the doctor who requested the examination as soon as possible.

You should receive an appointment to see the doctor again, if you do not already have one booked.

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 further information about consent or confidentiality, please read our information leaflet outlining consent.

Further Information

If you have any questions about your examination or need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact us in Clinical Imaging on 01872 252338.

If you need to change your appointment please contact the Clinical Imaging appointment clerks on 01872 252290.

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

