

## Patient information factsheet

# Having a proctogram examination

This factsheet will give you information about having a proctogram. We hope it will answer some of the questions you may have but, if there is anything you do not understand, a member of your healthcare team will be happy to explain further.

### What is a proctogram?

A proctogram is an examination of your pelvic floor to see what happens when you empty your bowels and why you may be having problems doing this.

The procedure will take approximately 15 minutes but you will be in the department for at least two hours, due to the preparation for the procedure.

### Preparation for the procedure

No special preparation is needed before arriving at the hospital and you can eat and drink as normal on the day.

If you are female and of childbearing capacity, you will be asked to complete a form with the date of your last period and whether there is any possibility you may be pregnant. This is because this examination should only be performed when we can be sure that you are not pregnant.

Please let us know as soon as possible if you have problems standing or transferring from a wheelchair so that we can make arrangements.

You should also let us know if you have had any previous allergic reactions to iodine or x-ray contrast (a liquid that is visible on x-ray) or if you are allergic to wheat. Our telephone number is over the page.

### What to bring with you

You might want to bring your own dressing gown, slippers and reading material.

### During the procedure

You will be asked to drink some barium so that your small bowel is visible on x-rays. After you have drunk the barium, you need to wait for approximately 60 to 90 minutes to enable it to reach the end of the small bowel.

You will then be asked to change into a hospital gown before being taken to the examination room.

If you are female, the doctor may ask to insert some gel mixed with contrast visible on x-ray into your vagina, so that the vagina can be seen during the examination.

The radiologist (a doctor who uses x-rays to diagnose illnesses) will then gently insert a small rubber tube into your rectum (back passage) and fill your rectum with a mixture containing barium, which is also visible using x-rays.

You will then be asked to sit on a special chair by the x-ray machine. The doctor will give you some instructions and then ask you to try and empty your bowels while x-rays are taken. You may feel embarrassed about having to empty your bowels in front of other people. However, try to remember that this is a routine test and we want you to feel as relaxed as possible. When you are asked to empty your bowels, a screen will be brought across to make a private area.

When you have passed all the barium in your rectum, or enough pictures have been obtained, the examination is

# Patient information factsheet

complete.

Most people do not find the procedure painful but you may experience some discomfort when the catheter is inserted into the rectum.

## After the procedure

No special care is necessary after the procedure and you can return to your usual daily activities. Try to drink plenty of fluids.

There is a bathroom and toilet immediately next to the examination room in case you need to pass any more barium.

Your bowel motions may be pale in colour for a short period due to the barium.

## Risks

There is some exposure to radiation during the procedure because x-rays are used. However, as this is a low dose examination, exposure to radiation is kept to a minimum. Generally, the amount of radiation you are exposed to during this procedure is equivalent to between a few days and a few years of exposure to natural radiation from the environment.

## Results

The radiologist will examine the pictures and a report of the findings will be sent to the doctor who requested the procedure. This report should be available at your outpatient follow up appointment.

## Further information

Some of your questions should have been answered in this factsheet but remember that this is only a starting point for discussion about your treatment with the doctors looking after you.

It is important that you are satisfied that you have received enough information about the procedure. If you have any questions before or after the examination please telephone the radiology department on 023 8120 4870 from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

## Useful links

NHS Choices [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audio tape, please telephone 023 8120 4688 for help.