

We hope this booklet has been helpful, if you have any questions or require further advice please contact our department:

Clinical Admin Team (CAT 3)
Tel: 0118 322 6890 or
Email: rbb-tr.cat3@nhs.net

Further information

Bowel incontinence NHS
www.nhs/conditions/bowel-incontinence

Bladder and Bowel Community
www.bladderandbowel.org

Pelvic Floor Society
www.thepelvicfloorsociety.co.uk

MASIC
www.masic.org.uk

To find out more about our Trust visit
www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format

RBFT GI Physiology (Anorectal Physiology)
Reviewed: September 2026.
Next review due: September 2028.



Anorectal physiology studies

Information for patients

You have been referred by your consultant for anorectal physiology studies in our Pelvic Floor Clinic. This leaflet explains the tests and what to expect when you attend your appointment.

What are anorectal physiology studies?

These studies test the sphincter (bottom) muscles in your rectum (back passage) and include:

- **Anal pressure measurement:** this test measures the strength and function of the muscles in your back passage. A small catheter (tube) about the size of a drinking straw is introduced into your back passage. You will be asked to squeeze and relax these muscles and the pressures will be recorded on a computer. The test takes around 15 minutes.
- **Rectal compliance (sensation):** assesses the amount your rectum (back passage) can hold. This involves passing a thin tube with a small balloon attached to it. The balloon is gently inflated at intervals and you will be asked to confirm when you can feel this filling up. This test can also measure the way your muscles relax when you have your bowel open. The test takes 5-10 minutes.

- **Endo-anal ultrasound:** images the sphincter muscles. A finger-sized probe is gently placed in your back passage and images (pictures) are recorded. This can show if there is any damage to the sphincter (bottom) muscles, e.g. following childbirth. The test takes 5-10 minutes.

Will I need any preparation?

We would ask you to empty your bowels before you come to your appointment. If you find this difficult, our consultants recommend emptying your bowels using glycerin suppositories, which you can purchase over the counter at the chemist or ask your GP to prescribe them. A glycerin suppository is a small, bullet-shaped medicine that you insert into the back passage. Please follow the directions for use carefully or ask a NHS professional for assistance or help.

You may eat and drink and take any prescribed medication before and after the tests.

Who will carry out the tests?

The tests are carried out by a specially trained member of the Colorectal Team, either a doctor or a clinical nurse specialist.

Will the tests be painful?

Some of our patients have described the tests as 'uncomfortable' and 'embarrassing', rather than painful.

How long will the tests take?

Each test takes between 5-15 minutes each. However, we allow an hour for each appointment. A medical and symptom history will also be recorded at this appointment, so please bring any relevant information with you.

Will I be able to drive after the tests?

Yes, you will be able to drive following your tests as no sedation is required.

Can I bring someone with me?

Yes, you can bring a family member or close friend with you to your appointment, if you wish to. If you require a chaperone, let us know and we will arrange one.

What will happen after the tests?

You will be able to resume normal activities following the tests.

We may be able to discuss your test results at this time and offer treatment advice that will help with your bowel problems.