

Barium proctogram

What is a barium proctogram?

It is a specialised X-ray examination which produces a series of images that enables us to see the way your lower abdominal structures move when you attempt to empty your bowels.

Why do I need this test and what are the benefits?

Your doctor has referred you for this imaging test to help find out the cause of your symptoms (e.g. incontinence, constipation or difficulty emptying your bowels). The test will help to assess the pelvic structures and to try and to establish a cause as to why you may have trouble emptying your bowels so you can have the appropriate treatment for it.

Can I bring a friend or relative?

Yes, but for safety reasons they will not be able to accompany you into the X-ray room, except in exceptional circumstances.

How long will it take?

You need to arrive one hour before your appointment time to drink some liquid barium which allows us to see your small bowel during the test.

The examination itself takes about 10 minutes.

What does it involve?

You will change into a hospital gown and be taken into the X-ray room where you will lie on a table and the doctor (radiologist) or specialist radiographer will gently insert some barium paste into your back passage (rectum). You will then be asked to sit on a commode and attempt to empty the barium paste while the radiologist or specialist radiographer takes x-rays.

We appreciate that this procedure requires privacy so we will make every effort to make you feel relaxed and comfortable.

Do I need to prepare for it?

No there is no preparation required before you attend for the test.

Will it hurt?

No, it should not hurt.

Are there any risks?

This test involves X-rays. The amount of radiation is kept to a minimum and is equivalent to the amount of background radiation you naturally receive over 3-5 weeks.

Barium can constipate and you are advised to drink plenty of fluids after the test to wash out the barium from your system.

Barium is not absorbed by the body and so it is very rare for an allergic reaction to occur with a barium test.

This test should not be performed if there is any chance that you might be pregnant as radiation is potentially harmful to the baby. Females of childbearing age should have their appointment within 10 days of the first day of their last period to avoid being x-rayed in early pregnancy.

If you weigh over 20 stone or 127 kg please contact us.

There is a very small risk (1 in 2000) of a tear to the lining of the rectum. This usually only occurs if the patient also has severe bowel inflammation.

Are there any alternative procedures?

There is no alternative procedure available in this Trust.

How will I get the results?

Your referring doctor will receive a copy of the x-ray report. Your referring doctor will either arrange a letter to inform you of your results or a follow up appointment in the outpatient clinic.

Can I drive home afterwards?

Yes.

Any other questions?

If you have any other queries please telephone the Radiology Department on 0118 322 7911.

Further information

For further information about the Trust, visit our website www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

RAD_0038

Radiology Department, February 2019

Review due: February 2021