

Information for patients and carers

Defecating Proctogram



What is a defecating proctogram?

A defecating proctogram is an X-ray examination, which demonstrates your rectum (the last 10-15 cm of your large bowel) and the way your muscles (pelvic floor) work during defecation (emptying your bowels).

A defecating proctogram is carried out to identify what may be causing your symptoms (e.g. incontinence or difficulty in passing a motion).

As part of the examination an X-ray dye (barium) is used.

A very small number of patients have an allergic reaction to the barium. Before your examination begins the radiographer will ask you a series of questions about your medical history, including any allergies you may have. This will help us assess if you are at risk of an allergic reaction.

Your examination will be performed by a specially trained advanced practitioner radiographer and an assistant.

Please inform us before you attend:

- If you are or think you may be pregnant
- If you are breast/chest feeding
- If you weigh over 28 stone
- If you feel you may need further assistance with transferring (including the use of a hoist)
- If you require an interpreter – please inform us as soon as you receive your appointment letter and we will arrange an official interpreter for you

Are there any special preparations required before the examination?

There are no special preparations for this examination. You may eat and drink as normal and take any regular medications.

Can I bring a relative or friend with me?

Anyone can accompany you to the hospital however they will usually not be allowed into the room when you have your examination. Please note that we do not have childcare facilities; if you need to bring your children with you please bring along an adult who can supervise them while your examination is being done.

What happens when I arrive at the X-ray department?

On arrival at the X-ray department, please book in at the reception desk where you will be asked to have a seat in the waiting area. You will then be shown through to the examination room where the radiographer will check some details with you and complete a checklist to ensure it is safe for you to have the barium.

The radiographer will explain the examination and answer any questions you may have.

What happens during the examination?

The radiographer will show you through to a changing area, which is connected to the examination room, and ask you to put on a hospital gown.

When you are ready you will be asked to lie on your left hand side on a bed in the examination room.

Once you are comfortable the radiographer will use some lubricating gel to gently insert a small soft tube into your rectum (back passage).



Once the tube is in place a thick barium paste will be introduced through the tube to fill your rectum.

The tube will then be removed and you will be assisted down from the bed and asked to sit on a bedpan which is positioned next to the X-ray camera.

The radiographer will go behind a screen to offer you some privacy and you will not be able to see them. However, you will hear them asking you to do certain pelvic floor muscle movements; this involves 'clenching up' and 'bearing down'. You will then be asked to pass the barium paste into the bedpan.

The radiographer will take the required X-rays from behind the screen as you carry out the appropriate movements.

We will make every effort to make you feel relaxed during the examination and we will ensure that your privacy and dignity is maintained at all times.

What happens after the examination?

The examination will finish when you feel ready to get off the bedpan. The radiographer will show you back through to the changing area where you will be able to get dressed again. You will then be able to leave the X-ray department.

Are there any side effects?

Following the examination a small amount of barium may remain within your rectum; this will pass during your routine motions over the following days.

The barium is white and does not get absorbed by your body so your motions may be very pale or white for a few days after the examination. The barium liquid can also sometimes cause slight constipation; to minimise this we advise you to drink plenty of clear fluids after your examination. Very rarely the barium can make you feel sick and/or cause diarrhoea. The radiographer will offer further guidance on these side effects before your examination.

Are there any risks?

There are some small risks involved with X-rays but only the minimum amount of radiation is used to produce the images required. We use the smallest dose possible, in line with national regulations, to provide as much information as we can. This allows the clinician to make an accurate diagnosis to help plan your treatment, therefore the benefits of having the X-ray examination far outweigh the radiation dose you will receive.

Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact Royal Preston Hospital X-ray Department on **01772 522096**.

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.patient.co.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

Further information about radiation can be found on the government webpage:

Medical Radiation: uses, measurements and dose safety advice

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/medical-radiation-uses-dose-measurements-and-safety-advice>

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If you want to stop smoking, you can also contact Smokefree Lancashire on Freephone **08081962638**.

Please ask a member of staff if you would like help in understanding this information.

This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.

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