

Defaecating Proctogram

WHAT IS A DEFAECATING PROCTOGRAM?

This is an x-ray (fluoroscopy) examination of the rectum (back passage) or lower 10-15cm of the large bowel using barium paste. It is designed to demonstrate the way the muscles around this area work, and also shows if the rectum is folding in on itself (rectal prolapse), or if there is an out-pouching of the rectum known as a rectocele. A rectocele may cause problems with emptying the bowel completely.

While this examination is not usually painful, we understand that it is embarrassing, and every effort will be made to make you feel as comfortable as possible. The procedure usually takes about 10 minutes.

BEFORE THE PROCEDURE:

It is important that the rectum is empty at the time of the examination, so a suppository is supplied to you when you make an appointment. Approximately one hour before your examination, insert the suppository and try to retain it for 15 minutes. Empty the bowel as required over the next 45 minutes. If you are anxious about this process, please come into the radiology department one hour before your appointment and you may insert the suppository here.

DURING THE PROCEDURE:

- You will be asked to change into a gown before the examination.
- A radiologist will perform the examination assisted by a radiographer, who will explain the procedure to you and give you the opportunity to ask any questions.
- You will be asked to lie on the fluoroscopy table. After an initial plain x-ray of the abdomen, thick barium paste is inserted into the rectum and another x-ray is taken.
- The room is then be rearranged and you will be seated on a receptacle and asked to empty your bowel while a video recording is made. You may feel worried that this is a little undignified, but we will do our best to ensure your privacy.

AFTER THE PROCEDURE:

- After the procedure you may use the toilet again, and any remaining barium should pass normally.
- You may also wish to have a shower in the radiology department before you leave.
- The radiologist may give you a brief verbal report at the end of this procedure, and a formal written report will be sent to your referring doctor within the day.

RISKS OF THE PROCEDURE

- This procedure is generally considered to be a safe test, as barium is a harmless material.
- It is possible to become a little constipated after this procedure. Drinking plenty of fluids afterwards will help to prevent this.
- Because this procedure is done under x-ray guidance, should notify your doctor prior to booking an appointment if you are pregnant or suspect you may be pregnant.