

Pelvic floor telephone assessment clinic

A guide to our specialist pelvic
floor service

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Why have I been referred to the pelvic floor service?

Your doctor believes that you may have a problem with your bowels and has referred you to the pelvic floor service to have some tests or see a pelvic floor specialist.

We know that bowels are an embarrassing subject and no one likes to discuss them. But the specialist bowel team at the hospital, known as the pelvic floor team, are very used to this subject. Try not to feel embarrassed or uncomfortable about discussing your symptoms or asking them questions.

This booklet aims to answer some of the questions you may have about your referral for bowel problems. It will also explain what you can expect when you are contacted by us and, following this, when you come for your appointment/tests.

What happens after I have been referred?

When you were referred to our service, you will have been asked for your telephone number (mobile or landline). Together with this leaflet you should have received a letter confirming the date and time of your **telephone assessment appointment – please check the letter to find out when to expect the phone call.** A pelvic floor specialist will call you on the number that you supplied at the specific date and time.

Please ensure that you are available and free to talk at the time of this phone call. You do not need to come to hospital for the telephone assessment.

During this telephone call we will ask you questions about your health, your symptoms and your personal circumstances, and advise you what test(s) you will need to have. Most patients are referred for these tests straight after their telephone assessment and are sent a letter with the appointment details.

Please note that at present we are unable to book your test(s) for you during the telephone appointment, but we will be able to tell you roughly how long you will have to wait.

What tests am I likely to need?

Different tests give us different information about you and your bowels. The most common tests that the pelvic floor team perform are:

- anal/vaginal/perineal ultrasound
- ano-rectal manometry
- defecating proctography
- colonoscopy
- transit study.

You can read more about these tests in the glossary at the back of this booklet. You should also receive detailed information about the test(s) you need with your appointment letter.

What questions may I be asked during the telephone assessment?

Please use the questions below to prepare for your telephone assessment.

Questions about your symptoms

- What symptoms have you been experiencing?
- How long have your symptoms been going on for?
- Are they continuous, or do they come and go?
- Is there a pattern, for example the same time of day, or before or after meals?

Change in your lifestyle

- Have you changed your diet or exercise routine?
- Have you recently felt stressed?
- Have you been overseas lately?
- Have your friends, family or colleagues had similar problems?
- Are you on any new medicines?

Your medical history

- Have you had any bowel, gynaecological or bladder problems in the past?
- Have you had any operations?
- Have you had any cardiac (heart) problems?
- Do you take any medicines, including blood-thinning medicines?
- Are you diabetic? If so, do you take tablets or insulin?
- Are you allergic to any medicines?
- Are you under the care of a doctor for any problems?

Family medical history

- Have any of your family members had cancer, especially bowel cancer?
- Have any of your family members had a bowel disorder, such as Crohn's disease or colitis?

Your personal circumstances

- Do you live alone?
- How mobile are you/do you need help getting around?
- What support do you have around?

Please tell the pelvic floor specialist if you are unsure about or do not understand something you have been told, or if you have any concerns.

What if I choose not to have the recommended test(s)?

You will have an opportunity to discuss this with the pelvic floor specialist during your telephone assessment. If, following this, you do not feel that you want to go ahead with the recommended test(s), you should discuss this with the doctor that referred you to our service.

What happens after I have had my investigation(s) or test(s)?

There are three possibilities of what might happen after you have had your test(s):

1. Your test(s) will be reviewed by the pelvic floor team and you will be contacted by letter with the results and a follow-up plan. Please contact us if you have not received your letter within a few weeks of your test(s).
2. Sometimes we can tell patients there and then what we think has been causing their symptoms. If this is the case, we may be able to offer you treatment straight away, or refer you for treatment.
3. If we have not found the cause of your symptoms, we may need to refer you for further tests or investigations. This could include blood tests, further x-rays, endoscopy tests or scans.

Glossary

Colonoscopy

This is a test where a thin flexible telescope with a camera on the end is inserted into the bowel via the back passage to examine the whole of the large bowel. You will need to take some laxatives and follow a special diet before colonoscopy. We will give you a sedative injection for this test.

Proctoscopy

This is an examination of the back passage (anus and rectum) with a small plastic telescope.

Rectal

It refers to the rectum (lowest part of the large bowel nearest the back passage).

Ano-rectal manometry

This is a test to check whether the muscles of your bottom and anus are working properly.

While you lie on your left side, a small tube with water running through it (about the size of a pen) will be inserted into your anus. This measures the pressures in your anus when your muscles are at rest and when you squeeze them. A small balloon will then be inserted into your bottom to check sensation. The whole procedure takes around 15 minutes.

Endo-anal ultrasound

Ultrasound uses inaudible sound waves to show the structure of your anal sphincter muscles and check if there is any damage.

While you lie on your front, a small ultrasound probe, about the size of a finger, will be inserted inside your anus. The ultrasound images produced are recorded and later interpreted by a doctor. This test takes about 10 minutes.

Perineal and vaginal ultrasound

These tests are done to get an overview of the pelvic floor, and to see the surface and deep pelvic structures in more detail. You will need to drink two glasses of water to fill the bladder before the scans. We will ask you to lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the table. You will be covered at all times.

For the vaginal scan, a small probe about the size of your finger will be inserted into the vagina. The ultrasound images are recorded and later interpreted by a doctor. This test takes about 15 minutes.

For the perineal scan, a flat probe will be placed on your perineum (or undercarriage). The ultrasound images are recorded and later interpreted by a doctor. This test takes about 10 minutes.

Proctogram

This is an x-ray test to examine how your bowel is working. You will be given a drink containing barium, which allows your bowel to show up on x-ray. Barium is a thick, chalky substance that takes about 30 minutes to reach your small intestine. We will also insert some barium paste into your rectum.

We will ask you to sit on a special toilet chair in privacy, to squeeze the barium out and empty your bowel while x-rays are taken. This will take about 10 minutes.

None of the tests above are painful and they are not more uncomfortable than being internally examined by your doctor. You will be told exactly what is going to happen so that you know what to expect as the tests are being performed.

Transit study

This is a special x-ray investigation that looks at how quickly stool passes through your bowel. You will need to take a special tablet containing small shapes, which will travel through your bowel, and come to hospital to

have an x-ray taken five days later. You will receive separate instructions for this test from the radiology department.

Appointments at King's

We have teamed up with King's College Hospital in a partnership known as King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at King's. To make sure everyone you meet always has the most up-to-date information about your health, we may share information about you between the hospitals.

Contact details

If you have any questions or concerns about your appointment, please contact the Pelvic Floor Unit secretaries on **020 7188 4191** or **020 7188 7893** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

For any clinical queries, please call:

- Carlene Igbedioh, integrated continence advanced nurse practitioner, on **020 7188 5865**
- Monica Lyons, nurse manager (Pelvic Floor Unit), on **020 7188 4192**
- Fiona Hibberts, consultant nurse, on **020 7188 6475**

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Notes

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Contact us

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

t: 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas' **t:** 020 7188 8803 at Guy's **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

Language Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch using the following contact details.

t: 020 7188 8815 **fax:** 020 7188 5953

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

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