

Urodynamic test to check how your bladder works

This leaflet explains more about a urodynamic test, how to prepare for it and what to expect afterwards. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is a urodynamic test?

A urodynamic test uses an x-ray imaging to check the function of your bladder and help establish the cause of your bladder problem.

What are the benefits of having the test?

Your doctor/specialist nurse has recommended that you have the test so that they can accurately establish the cause of your bladder problem. Symptoms for different conditions can be quite similar, so we need to do the test to make sure that we diagnose and treat your bladder problem correctly. If you do not have a urodynamic test, we cannot offer you surgery for stress urinary incontinence or bladder surgery.

Are there any risks associated with a urodynamic test?

After having a urodynamic investigation there is a small possibility that you may develop a urinary tract infection. This is caused by the insertion of the catheters (thin, flexible tubes) into your bladder during the test. Please read section **What do I need to do after I go home?** for tips on how to prevent an infection from developing after the test.

What are the symptoms of a urine infection?

If you are developing a urine infection, you may:

- have a stronger urge to pass urine
- notice that your urine smells, is cloudy or has blood in it
- want to pass urine more often during the day and night
- notice that you get a burning or stinging sensation when you pass urine, and feel that you are only passing small amounts at a time
- get a lower backache or pain in your kidneys
- feel hot and develop a temperature.

What to do if you suspect you have an infection:

- Increase your fluid intake to about two and a half litres a day unless you have already done so.
- Contact your GP. He/she will want to test your urine or send a sample to a laboratory for testing. It will help if you can take a urine sample with you when you go to your GP. If you do have an infection, you may be given antibiotics to treat it. Take the whole course of antibiotics prescribed to you to make sure that the infection has completely cleared up.

Are there any alternatives?

There is no other way for your doctor or specialist nurse to get the level of information he/she needs to make a diagnosis.

How do I prepare for the test?

You should have received a questionnaire with your appointment letter. Please complete this and bring it with you to your appointment. This information is vital to give the doctor/specialist nurse a more detailed picture of your bladder problems.

You will be asked to arrive for your test with a comfortably full bladder. If you are unable to do this or you find this difficult, please arrive early for your test and we will give you something to drink to fill up your bladder. If you are desperate to go to the toilet before your test starts, please talk to the nurse in the clinic. You will need to empty your bladder in a special toilet at the beginning of the test. If we know you are desperate to pass urine, we may be able to change the order in which the test and consultation is carried out. This will allow you to empty your bladder first.

If you think that you are or could be pregnant, it is important that you tell the doctor or nurse at the beginning of the test.

Giving my consent (permission)

We want to involve you in decisions about your care and treatment, and you will need to give verbal consent if you decide to go ahead. This will confirm that you agree to have the treatment and you understand what it involves.

You should receive the leaflet, **Helping you decide: our consent policy**, which gives you more information. If you do not, please ask a member of staff caring for you for a copy.

What happens before the test?

You will see either a doctor or specialist nurse. They will ask you questions about your condition and the information you have provided in the questionnaire. You will need to change into a hospital gown which opens at the back. You will be able to leave the top half of your clothes on and you can keep your underwear on until the test starts.

What does the urodynamic test involve?

The test takes place in the x-ray department. There will be a specialist nurse, an x-ray assistant and a doctor present. We may also ask you if you agree for a medical student to be present during the test. If you do not want the medical student present, please let the staff know. Your wishes will always be respected and this will not affect your care in any way.

For the first part of the test, you will need to empty your bladder into a special toilet called a flowmeter. This measures how much urine you pass and the flow of the urine. This is why you need to come to the test with a full bladder. You will be left alone in the room while you are doing this.

The next part of the test measures the way your bladder works as it fills up. You will need to lie down on a special bed. Two catheters will be put into your bladder via urethra (the tube that urine passes through from the bladder before leaving the body). One catheter is to fill up your bladder and the other to measure the pressure in your bladder. Another fine tube is then

put into your vagina, or sometimes back passage. This allows us to compare the pressure inside your bladder with the pressure outside your bladder.

Once the catheters are in the correct position, fluid runs into your bladder at a controlled rate. This slowly fills your bladder while recordings are made. The doctor or nurse performing the test will ask you questions, for example how your bladder feels and when it feels full.

Once your bladder is full, the bed will move and stand you upright. You will be asked to cough and the doctor or specialist nurse will take some x-rays of your bladder. If you leak urine when you cough, try not to feel embarrassed. If you leak at home when you cough, it is best for us to see you leak during the test. It is important to remember that we need to see how your bladder behaves on a day-to-day basis to make sure that we are providing you with the correct treatment.

At the end of the test and with the catheters still in place, you will be asked to empty your bladder into the special toilet again.

How long does the test take?

The test usually takes about 20 minutes.

Will I feel any pain?

You may experience a stinging feeling as the catheters are inserted but this only takes a few seconds. Once they are in place, you should not feel any discomfort.

What happens after the test?

The catheters will be removed and you will be asked to change back into your clothes. We provide a cloth and towel for you to freshen up. You will need to wait in the waiting room while the doctor or nurse types a report of the test.

The doctor or nurse will explain the result to you and then you can go home.

You may be given a copy of the report to take to your next appointment in the gynaecology department. If you have not already been given an appointment, you will be sent one in the post.

What do I need to do after I go home?

You can go back to work and resume your usual activities straight away.

To help prevent a urinary tract infection from developing, you should:

- drink extra fluids for the next 48 hours. This will help you to 'flush' the system through. Aim to drink about two and a half litres of fluid a day (nine to 10 cups) for 48 hours after the test.
- cut down on tea and coffee for 48 hours after the test. This will reduce bladder irritation until your bladder returns to normal. Drink water, herbal and fruit teas, juices and squash.
- take a bit longer when you go to the toilet to pass urine to make sure that your bladder is completely empty. When you have finished passing water, wait for a couple of seconds and then try again – normally you can squeeze a small drop out! This is often the urine with the bacteria in it, which may cause the infection.

If you experience any signs of infection as described on page 1, please contact your GP.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your urodynamic test, please contact Ellie Stewart, clinical nurse specialist, on 020 7188 3671 (Mondays and Tuesdays, 9am to 5pm). Out of hours, you can leave her a message and she will return your call when she is next in the office.

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

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:

e: 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 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

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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t: 0848 143 4017

e: members@gstt.nhs.uk

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