

Urethrogram (urethrocytogram)

This leaflet explains more about having a urethrogram examination, including the benefits, risks and any alternatives. It also provides information on what you can expect when you come to hospital. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to a doctor, radiographer or nurse caring for you.

What is a urethrogram?

A urethrogram is an investigation that allows us to visualise the urethra (the water pipe that passes through the penis and leads to the bladder). The procedure is done by both

- a radiologist (a doctor who uses X-rays to diagnose and treat illnesses); and
- a radiographer (a health professional that produces the images used to diagnose and treat illnesses).

The procedure uses a type of X-ray called fluoroscopic imaging to view images in real time. An X-ray dye, called contrast, is also used. The contrast dye shows up on the images and allows the radiologist to clearly see and check your internal organs. The radiologist will then review and report on the images.

What are the benefits – why should I have a urethrogram?

This examination will help your doctor to make a correct diagnosis or decision about your treatment. You may be having a urethrogram to check for any problems, such as difficulty urinating, or it may be a follow-up examination after an operation. If you have any questions about the exam, please contact your referring doctor.

What are the risks?

This investigation involves exposure to X-rays. X-rays consist of a type of radiation known as ionising radiation. The doses that are used in medical X-rays are very low and the associated risks are minimal. The radiographer is responsible for making sure that your dose is kept as low as possible and that the benefits of having the X-ray outweigh any risk.

The contrast dye that is used contains iodine which some people are allergic to. If you have had an **allergic reaction** to X-ray contrast in the past or if you have a known **allergy to iodine**, you must tell your doctor. Alternatively, contact the X-ray department on **t: 020 7188 5527** (for Guy's Hospital) or **t: 020 7188 5490** (for St Thomas' Hospital).

Female patients

X-rays can be harmful for an unborn baby and should be avoided by women who are or may be pregnant. It is recommended that the examination is performed within 10 days of the first day of the onset of your menstrual period. If your appointment is not within this time or if you think you may be pregnant, please contact the X-ray department.

Are there any alternatives to having a urethrogram?

Alternative imaging may be available, but your doctor feels that this is the most appropriate test for you. Please speak to your referring doctor, or to the radiologist on the day of your examination for more information.

How can I prepare for a urethrogram?

There is no specific preparation for a urethrogram examination. Please arrive promptly for your appointment to help us prevent any delays. Continue to take your medicines as you normally would.

Giving my consent (permission)

We want to involve you in decisions about your care and treatment. If you decide to go ahead, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This states that you agree to have the treatment and you understand what it involves.

If you would like more information about our consent process, please speak to a member of staff caring for you.

What happens during the urethrogram?

You will be asked to change into a hospital gown. You may be asked to remove jewellery, dentures, glasses and any metal objects or clothing that might interfere with the X-ray images. Please inform the radiologist of any medications you are taking, or of any severe allergies, recent illnesses or other medical conditions.

You will be asked to empty your bladder prior to the examination. You will then be brought into the fluoroscopy room and asked to lie on the X-ray table. Your genital area will be cleaned and draped with sterile towels. Some local anaesthetic jelly will be used to make the examination more comfortable.

A thin hollow tube called a catheter will be slowly inserted into your urethra (the opening through which you urinate). A small amount of the contrast dye will then be passed through the urethra and into the bladder via the catheter, before the X-ray images are taken.

You may be repositioned so that we can see the area from several angles. The X-ray equipment may also move around you in order to gain the best possible images. The radiologist and radiographer will be with you at all times to assist you.

Occasionally you may be asked to urinate whilst the X-ray images are taken. You may feel embarrassed about having to urinate in front of other people. However, this is a routine test and we want you to feel as relaxed as possible. When you are asked to urinate, a screen will be brought around you to make a private area.

Once all the X-ray images have been taken, the catheter and clamp will be removed. You may be given an injection of antibiotics to reduce the risk of any infection.

The examination lasts approximately 20 minutes but may take longer. You may have to wait a few minutes during your exam while the images are being checked. It is important that the images contain all the necessary information.

Will I feel any pain?

There may be some discomfort when the catheter is inserted but this should not be painful. Some people experience discomfort urinating during and immediately after the procedure. This discomfort usually resolves in less than 12 hours. If you are concerned, please tell the radiologist or radiographer.

What happens after the procedure?

There are no after-effects to the examination. Once you are happy to leave, you are free to do so. Please contact your GP or referring team if you feel unwell in the days following the examination.

When will I get the results?

The images taken during the examination are studied by the radiologist at a later date. They will then produce a detailed report and send this to the doctor who referred you for the test. Your referring doctor will then discuss the results with you and any treatment you may need.

You should already have a follow up appointment with the team who referred you. If not, please contact them to arrange one so that you can discuss the results of this test.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your urethrogram test please contact the X-ray department on **t:** 020 7188 5527 at Guy's Hospital or **t:** 020 7188 5490 at St Thomas' Hospital, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **w:** 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, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services

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

t: 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

This service 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 **w:** www.111.nhs.uk

Leaflet number: 3198/VER4

Date published: May 2020

Review date: May 2023

© 2020 Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust

A list of sources is available on request