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Cystogram

How to prepare and what to expect

This handout explains how a cystogram works, how to prepare, what to expect, and how to get your results.

What is a cystogram?

A *cystogram* is an exam of the bladder and lower urinary tract. During the exam, X-ray pictures are taken of the bladder and the *urethra* (the tube that carries urine out of the body).

One type of cystogram is called a *voiding cystourethrogram* (VCUG). If you are having a VCUG, X-rays will also be taken as you empty your bladder. A VCUG shows if there are any problems in your urine flow.

How does the exam work?

- A *catheter* (small, flexible tube) will be placed in your urethra, if you did not arrive with one.
- Your bladder will then be filled with *contrast* (iodinated X-ray dye). The contrast helps the details of your bladder show more clearly on the X-ray images.
- After your bladder is full, the catheter may be removed if it was placed by a nurse.
- Small amounts of X-rays are passed through your body. Pictures of the bladder and urinary tract will show on a monitor.
- You do not need to have *sedation* (relaxing medicine) for this exam.

How do I prepare?

- Tell your provider about:
 - Any recent illnesses or other health issues.
 - Any allergies you have to medicines.
 - If you have ever had a reaction to contrast that contains iodine.
- Women: Tell your provider if there is any chance you are pregnant.



Talk with your referring provider about the results of your cystogram.

What can I expect?

- The exam will take about 30 minutes.
- We may ask you to change into a gown and remove your undergarments.
- We will ask you to remove jewelry, metal, and any plastic objects that could show up on the X-ray images.

How is the exam done?

- The radiology technologist will help you get into position on the table.
- One or more pictures will be taken of your pelvic area before you receive the contrast.
- If you do not come with a catheter in place, a nurse will place one for the exam. The nurse will clean your genital area with antiseptic soap and then place the catheter into your urethra.
- The catheter will be connected to a bottle of contrast. The contrast will drip into your bladder until it is filled.
- The radiologist and the technologist will use a special X-ray machine called a fluoroscope to watch your bladder as it fills. They will be able to see if any of the contrast goes backward into one or both ureters (the tubes that carry urine from the kidneys to the bladder).
- When your bladder is full, the technologist will help you get into various positions as the radiologist takes a series of images with the fluoroscope.
- After the exam is done, the catheter placed by the nurse will be removed.
- If you are having a VCUG (voiding cystourethrogram):
 - A series of X-rays will be taken as you empty your bladder into a urinal.
 - After you are done, a final X-ray is taken to see how well your bladder has emptied.

What will I feel during the exam?

- A cystogram or VCUG does not cause pain. But, you may feel some discomfort when the catheter is placed and your bladder is filled with contrast. You may feel like you need to urinate as your bladder fills.
- When your genital area is washed, the antiseptic soap may feel cold.

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

The radiologist will talk to you briefly about your X-ray images at the end of the exam. A radiologist trained in interpreting the exam will do a full review of the films and send a report to your *primary care physician* (PCP).

Your PCP will give you your exam results. You may also read your exam results on your MyChart page. If you need copies of your images on disc, call Radiology Records at 206.598.6206.

You and your PCP will decide the next step, such as treatment for a problem, as needed.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Call UW Medical Center Imaging Services weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.:

- Montlake campus:
206.598.6200
- Northwest campus:
206.598.6200
- HMC Imaging Services:
206.744.3105