

Having a Micturating Cystourethrogram

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Introduction

The aim of this information sheet is to help answer some of the questions you may have about having a micturating cystourethrogram examination. It explains the benefits, risks and alternatives of the procedure as well as what you can expect when you come to hospital. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is a micturating cystourethrogram?

A micturating cystourethrogram is a study of the lower urinary tract or, more specifically, the bladder and urethra (the opening through which you urinate). The examination shows the appearance of the bladder and how it fills and empties.

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 micturating cystourethrogram?

This examination will help your doctor to make a correct diagnosis or decision about your treatment. You may be having a micturating cystourethrogram to check for any problems such as repeated urinary tract infections or urinary incontinence, or it may be a follow-up exam after an operation. The examination can also look for structural problems of the bladder or if there has been injury to the bladder. **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.

How can I prepare for a micturating cystourethrogram?

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

What happens during the micturating cystourethrogram?

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. Then a thin hollow tube called a catheter will be inserted into your urethra (the opening through which you urinate). This might be a little uncomfortable, but should not be painful. The catheter will gently be advanced into your bladder.

A small amount of the contrast dye will then be put into your bladder via the catheter. As the contrast flows into your bladder, x-ray images will be 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.

The catheter will then be removed and the x-ray equipment will move into an upright position so that you are standing. The radiologist will then take x-ray images as you empty your bladder by urinating. 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. You may feel a strong urge to urinate at other times during the test. This is normal, but it is important to try to wait until you are asked to do so.

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. Please understand that 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 few 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.

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 micturating cystourethrogram?

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.

There may be students present during your consultation as part of their on-going training. Please let the staff know if you wish to be seen by a qualified professional only.

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