



Cystogram

How to prepare for your procedure

A cystogram is an exam used to check for problems of the bladder and lower urinary tract. Read this handout to learn how the exam works, how it is performed, how to prepare for the exam, what to expect during the exam, and how to get your results.

What is a cystogram?

A cystogram, or voiding cystourethrogram (VCUG), is an X-ray exam of the bladder and lower urinary tract. A catheter is put in place through the urethra, the urinary bladder is filled with a water-based contrast material, and the catheter is taken out. Several X-ray pictures of the bladder and urethra are captured. If your exam is a VCUG, pictures will also be taken as you empty your bladder. These pictures allow radiologists to detect any problems in the flow of urine.

How does the exam work?

Small amounts of X-rays are passed through the body. When a special film plate is exposed to the X-rays that pass through the patient, a picture of the inside of the body is captured. Contrast material is used to help produce more detailed pictures.

How should I prepare for the exam?

Because a cystogram or VCUG is an X-ray exam, metal objects can affect the picture. Avoid wearing clothing with snaps or zippers. No other special preparation is needed. It is unlikely that you will be sedated during the exam.

How is the exam performed?

1. The radiology technologist begins by placing you on the table.
2. One or more pictures are taken before the contrast material is placed.
3. You will be cleaned with special soap and a small, sterile tube will be placed through the urethra into the bladder.
4. The tube in the bladder is then connected to a bottle of a contrast material that drips into the bladder until it is filled.

Questions?

Call 206-598-6200

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC Clinic staff are also available to help at any time.

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5. The radiologist and the technologist watch a screen while the bladder is filling to see if any of the liquid goes backward into one or both ureters.
6. Once the bladder is filled during a VCUG, the catheter is removed and a series of pictures are taken as you empty your bladder.
7. After you are done, a final picture is taken to see how well the bladder empties.

What will I feel during the exam?

A cystogram or VCUG is painless. Before the catheter is inserted, your genital area will be washed and prepared with sterile supplies, which may feel cold due to the antiseptic. Placing the catheter and filling the bladder with the liquid contrast material causes no pain, but some people may feel mild discomfort. You may feel like you need to urinate as the bladder fills; as it gets full, you may feel some discomfort.

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

A radiologist trained to interpret cystograms will review the pictures and send a report to your doctor, who will give you your test results. The radiologist will not discuss the results with you. Based on the findings, you and your primary care doctor will decide the next step, such as treatment for a problem, as needed.

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