Women’s Services  
Urogynaecology Department

Urodynamic Investigation (bladder test)

Introduction

Urodynamics is the study of the bladder’s ability to hold urine and empty it in a normal fashion.

The investigations study the pressure and flow in the bladder and the urethra, (the tube through which you pass urine) giving useful information to help decide which treatment will be most appropriate for you.

Who is the leaflet for? What is its aim?

This leaflet is for you if you are having urodynamics. Its aim is to inform you about the procedure, what it entails, what you have to do to prepare and what to expect afterwards.

It also gives you contact details should you have any concerns or questions.

Why are urodynamic tests performed?

The test is performed to ascertain the nature of your symptoms and the best method to manage your condition.

- There may be a mixture of symptoms or uncertain symptoms i.e. frequency, urgency, leaking of urine, difficulty passing urine etc.
- When an operation is being considered, the doctor may want to make sure it is necessary and will be of benefit to you, or when surgery is considered as previous treatments have not improved your symptoms.
- Physiotherapy has been shown to have a role in the conservative treatment of some types of incontinence

Is there anything I should do in advance?

If you have been referred directly to clinic by your GP prior to meeting your consultant here at Addenbrooke’s, please make sure your surgery has tested a routine sample of urine, making sure you are free from a urine infection prior to the test. If you have symptoms of cystitis, please have this checked (a sample of urine may be required), so you have time for any necessary treatment with antibiotics before coming along to do the test.

If you are on medication for your bladder symptoms (anticholinergic), please inform the clinic nurse when you receive the appointment, as you may be asked to discontinue your treatment prior to having the test.
Speak to the clinic nurse if in any doubt about these instructions on 01223 216482 mornings only.

**Where do I go to have the test?**
You come to the Rosie Outpatient Clinic (Clinic 21) which can be found on level 1 of the Rosie.

**Do I need to bring anything?**
Please bring with you your voiding and volume chart, if you have been asked to keep one (this is a record of how often you pass urine, the measured amount you pass, and if you have any leaking in a 24-hour period). You are usually asked to keep this recording for three or four complete days.

**Do I need a full bladder?**
You will normally be asked to attend for the tests with a comfortably full bladder. So, if possible, please do not pass urine in the hour prior to your appointment.

If you find travelling with a full bladder uncomfortable and stressful, you may find it more convenient to arrive half an hour before your appointment time, giving you time to drink several glasses of water to fill your bladder.

**Does it hurt?**
There is no pain. If you feel tense, you may experience some slight discomfort and urgency to pass urine.

**How is the urodynamic test performed?**
In clinic you will meet a nurse trained in urodynamics, and possibly a doctor, who will explain what they are going to do during the procedure.

The procedure takes approximately 30 minutes and does not require any dieting or fasting. No anaesthetic is required. You will need to remove your lower clothing for the duration of the procedure.

You will be asked to pass urine into a special toilet that is connected to a computer and which measures how quickly your bladder is able to empty.

Following this we ask you to lie on a couch and a small plastic tube (called a catheter) will be inserted into your bladder so it can be filled with fluid. Two fine soft catheters will also be inserted, one into the bladder and the other into the vagina or rectum (back passage). These special catheters will record the pressures measured inside your bladder, and the pressure on the outside of the bladder itself from the abdominal cavity. The catheters are attached to a monitor that enables us to see your bladder activity.

Your bladder will then be filled with sterile water via the catheter in your urethra. During the procedure, you will be asked questions about the sensations in your bladder.
You will also be asked to do some exercises which might trigger the problem you are experiencing, (e.g. coughing, straining, standing up or listening to the sound of running water, dipping your hands in cold water). You will also be asked to tell the nurse/doctor when you first think you might like to empty your bladder, and again when your bladder feels full.

Finally, the catheter into your bladder will be removed and you will be asked to empty your bladder into the special toilet, with the two other fine catheters still in place. The catheters will then be removed and the procedure is complete.

You can have this test when you are menstruating, but you will be asked to remove any tampons for the procedure.

What to expect afterwards

For a day after the test, passing urine may sting a little. If you think that you have developed a urine infection i.e. you have increased frequency in passing urine or an unbearable stinging or burning sensation on passing urine, please let your doctor know, and you may be advised to take tablets of antibiotics for a short period of time after the test to prevent infection.

You are encouraged to drink plenty of water for the next 24 hours to help ‘flush’ your bladder through, in order to try and prevent any infection developing.

Make sure you have the details of your follow-up appointment.

Benefits

- To reproduce your symptoms and provide an explanation for the problems
- To demonstrate an underlying abnormality of storage (holding onto urine) or voiding (passing urine).

Risks

No matter how carefully the test is performed, urine infections can sometimes occur after it.

Contacts/Further information

- Outpatient appointments: 01223 217664
  (If you cannot attend your appointment for any reason, please call as soon as possible, during office hours Monday to Friday 08.00 – 16.00)

- Urogynaecology specialist nurses 01223 349239 or Bleep via switchboard 01223 245151 and ask for 157952 or 159216 08.00 – 18.00 Monday to Friday only
References/ Sources of evidence

- www.iuga.org

Privacy & Dignity
Every effort will be made to ensure maximum privacy during the test.

We are now a smoke-free site: smoking will not be allowed anywhere on the hospital site. For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169.

Help with this leaflet:
If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio format, please ask the department to contact Patient Information: 01223 216032 or patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Document history
Authors
Lisa Prentice & Charmaine Hood
Pharmacist
N/A
Department
Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 0QQ www.cuh.org.uk
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