

## HAVING ANO-RECTAL TESTS

### **What are these tests for?**

You may be having difficulty controlling your bowel. This may be because the anal sphincter muscles have become weak or damaged, with bowel contents being difficult to control. This is called faecal incontinence.

### **What are ano-rectal tests?**

There are four different tests that provide information about the sphincter muscles and how they are working. These are: -

- 1. Endo-anal ultrasound-** Uses ultrasound to provide an image of the sphincter muscles to see if there are any defects present. An ultrasound probe (about 2cm wide) is passed into the anal canal (back passage) and gently withdrawn to allow different views of the anal canal to be seen.
- 2. Ano-rectal manometry-** This provides information on the strength of the anal sphincter muscles and its ability to relax and contract. A small catheter is passed through the anal canal into the rectum. On the end of this catheter is a transducer that records the pressure inside. During this test the catheter is slowly pulled outwards from the rectum to the edge of the anal canal. You will be asked to squeeze the muscles in your back passage several times during this test.
- 3. Rectal sensitivity test-** This measures whether normal sensations are present in the rectum. A small catheter with a balloon on the end is passed into the rectum. The balloon is then slowly inflated in the rectum. You will be asked to say when you have the sensations of slight wind, a definite feeling of needing to go to the toilet, and then a strong urge to go to the toilet.
- 4. Pudendal nerve conductivity test-** This assesses the pudendal nerve (the nerve that supplies the sphincter muscles) by stimulating it and recording the response. The person performing this test places an electrode on the end of their gloved index finger. The finger is inserted into the anal canal and the nerve is stimulated first on the right side, then on the left side. You will be asked when you feel a throbbing sensation inside.

It may not be necessary to have all four of these tests. This will be discussed with you beforehand and you will be told which tests are recommended. Together these tests take approximately 30 mins to do.

### **Where will these tests take place and who does them?**

These tests take place in the Urodynamic Department. The clinical nurse specialist does them. Sometimes there may be a member of staff who is training observing the tests, however you will be informed of this and you can refuse to have them present.

**Will I need any special medication and will I be able to take my usual medication?**

The tests will be more comfortable for you if you have been able to empty your bowel prior to the test. No specific medications to empty the bowel, such as laxatives, are required for the test. You should continue with any medication that your doctor has prescribed for you.

**What will happen when I arrive at the Urodynamic Department?**

You will need to book in at the reception and the clerk will check your personal details with you. The clerk will show you to the waiting area until the nurse is ready to do your tests.

**What will happen during the tests?**

- The nurse will take you into the room where the tests are performed. Each test will be explained to you. You will be able to ask any questions about the test at this time
- You will be asked to remove your lower clothes and will be given a gown to wear.
- You will then lie on your left side on an examination couch.
- When all the tests are complete you will be able to get dressed and go home. Occasionally patients feel the need to go to the toilet immediately following the test. This is due to the stimulation of the rectum and is quite normal.

**When will I get the results of my test?**

This may vary depending which clinic you are attending. If a Consultant is available the results are usually discussed with you otherwise an appointment will be made for you to attend the next available clinic.

**If you have any questions about these tests you can contact the Urodynamic Department on 0151 702 4185 for advice.**

Useful websites for advice and support are: -

[www.bowelcontrol.org.uk](http://www.bowelcontrol.org.uk)  
[www.continence-foundation.org.uk](http://www.continence-foundation.org.uk)  
[www.incontact.org](http://www.incontact.org)

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