



The Portland Hospital
for Women and Children

URODYNAMICS

WHAT IS THE TEST?

Urodynamics refers to the investigations carried out to assess the function of your bladder and the bladder outflow tract (urethra). During the tests, your bladder is filled and then emptied while pressure readings are taken from the bladder and the abdomen. The test aims to give a diagnosis to your bladder symptoms.

WHY AM I HAVING THE TEST?

The urodynamics test can provide information for a range of different bladder conditions. It may complement other tests being organised by your doctor to investigate your symptoms. In particular the test is useful for people complaining of:

- Needing to go to the toilet frequently in the day or night
- A feeling or urgency / a compelling desire to rush to the toilet
- Urinary incontinence / involuntary loss of urine
- A poor stream of urine
- A feeling of incomplete bladder emptying
- Recurrent bladder infections

WHAT PREPARATION IS NEEDED FOR THE TEST?

You have to pass urine at the beginning of the test, so it is useful if you arrive for the test with a relatively full bladder, without being uncomfortable. Please eat and drink normally prior to the investigation and take all prescribed medications.

WHAT DOES THE TEST INVOLVE?

At the beginning of the test, you will be asked to empty your bladder in a special commode. This part of the test gives information on the flow of your urine. Next, a small tube is placed into your bladder. This tube measures pressures in your bladder, and it also allows your bladder to be filled with fluid (either salt water or a special radio-opaque liquid that is visible on X-ray). One other fine tube (with a small inflatable plastic bubble) is passed just inside the back passage, which allows measurement of pressures inside the abdomen.

Over the next 5-10 minutes your bladder is filled, and the pressure changes inside your bladder and abdomen are registered by the urodynamic machine. This gives an idea of how your bladder functions as it fills.

Once your bladder has been filled, the bladder is tested to see if there is any evidence of urinary leakage on straining the bladder (for example by coughing or jumping). You will then be asked to empty your bladder in the commode. After this, all the tubes will be removed. If you are having a video-urodynamics test, the doctor will take a series of x-rays during the test to take a closer look at your bladder and urethra.

IS THE TEST PAINFUL?

The test is well tolerated by most women. The insertion of the fine tubes into the bladder may be uncomfortable, but this sensation is extremely short-lived, and rarely reported as painful. The filling of the bladder with fluid is reported as a peculiar sensation by most women, but again is rarely reported as painful. Many women may get uncomfortable as their bladder gets full which serves as a marker for bladder capacity, and at this stage the bladder stops being filled.

THINGS WE NEED TO KNOW BEFORE THE TEST

Let the doctor know if you have any signs of a urine infection. If you do, the test may have to be deferred as it may give rise to misleading results in the presence of an infection. Let the doctor know if you think you might be pregnant, or if you are having a period.

WHAT ABOUT AFTER THE TEST?

Most women will complain of a little lower abdominal discomfort after the test, like mild period pain. This will generally be very short-lived (a couple of hours), and rarely requires simple painkillers (such as ibuprofen or paracetamol). Other women may notice a transient sensation of burning on passing urine the first couple of times after the test. It is sensible to ensure that you drink a good amount of fluid for a couple of days following the test to help with these symptoms. Very occasionally, you may develop a urine infection following the test (around one woman in a hundred having a urodynamics test). The symptoms are of a prolonged and persistent abdominal pain, pain on passing urine, and needing to go to the toilet very often for several hours. If so, you should contact your GP or consultant for antibiotics. Sometimes the doctor will issue you with antibiotics at the time of your test.