



University Hospitals Birmingham
NHS Foundation Trust



Anorectal physiology

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Anorectal physiology tests

You have been asked to attend an appointment at the hospital to have some tests carried out to investigate the functioning of your anus and rectum. The tests will last for approximately 20 minutes in total.

Upon arrival

When you arrive you will be greeted by a member of staff who will have a chat with you about your symptoms and answer any questions or worries you may have regarding the procedure.

The procedures

The tests will be performed in a quiet and private room.

TEST 1 – Anorectal manometry

- In order to take anorectal pressure readings we use a thin, flexible tube (known as a catheter) with a small balloon attached to the tip
- The narrow tube is inserted a very short distance into the rectum whilst you are lying down on a couch, on your left-hand side
- Once you are relaxed and comfortable we take the pressure measurements in order to assess the activity of the muscles in the anus and the sensitivity of the rectum

TEST 2 – Anal ultrasound

- This test will allow us to look at ultrasound pictures of the anal canal in order to visualise and assess the structure of the anal muscles and sphincters
- A narrow ultrasound probe is inserted a short distance into the anal canal, again whilst you are lying down on your left hand side
- The probe stays still in the anal canal for a few minutes so that the structures of the anal canal can be scanned

Frequently asked questions

What are the benefits of having these tests done?

The main benefit of these tests is so that the physician has clear documentation of the muscle structure and function of the anorectum. Using the information from these tests your physician can plan any treatment that you may require or provide reassurance if the tests are normal.

What are the risks and side effects of these tests?

- These tests are safe and should not be painful but may be slightly uncomfortable
- There is a very small risk that the probe could damage the lining of the anorectum. However, this is very unlikely as the tube is flexible.
- If you are allergic to latex, you should inform the GI Physiologist who does the test so that a latex free balloon can be used

Are there alternatives to anorectal physiology tests and ultrasound scanning?

Nothing can take the place of anorectal physiology tests and ultrasound scanning. However, other studies are used to investigate other aspects of anorectal function, the results of which will provide complementary information. For example, a sigmoidoscopy can be carried out to view the lining of the anal canal and rectum or a barium enema/barium proctogram, will allow viewing of the anatomy and function of the anorectum.

Other information

- The tests are not painful, but may be a little uncomfortable
- There is no sedation involved so you may drive afterwards if you wish
- No special preparation is required for the tests
- If you are pregnant, please inform the GI Physiologist who does the test prior to your appointment



The Trust provides free monthly health talks on a variety of medical conditions and treatments. For more information visit www.uhb.nhs.uk/health-talks.htm or call 0121 371 4323.

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