

# Anorectal Physiology and Ultrasound

Oxford Pelvic Floor Centre: [www.oxfordpelvicfloor.co.uk](http://www.oxfordpelvicfloor.co.uk)

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## **What is anorectal physiology and ultrasound?**

The term “anorectal” refers to the anal canal and rectum. These are the parts of your bowel just inside your bottom. The physiology tests assess the strength of your pelvic muscles, sphincter and nerves whilst the ultrasound examines the structure of the pelvic floor muscles and any damage that has occurred to them.

## **When are these tests performed?**

These investigations are basic tests of the pelvic floor structure and function. We will request them for many patients with incontinence, obstructed defaecation syndrome and prolapse. We also perform these tests in patients with other conditions affecting the bottom including anal fistulas and fissures. These tests are often combined with a proctogram and transit studies (see separate information sheet).

## **What do the tests involve?**

The tests take approximately one hour to perform in a private room with one of our nurse physiologists. She will start by asking you questions relating to your bowel function. Before the tests are undertaken, she will explain the procedures to you.

She will ask to remove your lower clothing and to lie on your side on a couch. She will insert a very fine probe (about the thickness of a piece of spaghetti) into your bottom and ask you to relax and squeeze to measure your sphincter muscle strength. She will then insert a deflated balloon into your bottom and inflate this slowly to measure the sensation (feeling) in your rectum as this can be abnormal in many patients with pelvic floor problems. The ultrasound test is then performed and this involves inserting a probe (about the

thickness of a finger) about one inch into the bottom.

## **Is there any special preparation?**

There is no special preparation required. We would usually suggest you try and empty your bowels before coming to the hospital and empty your bladder. You can eat and drink normally before the tests.

## **Are the tests very embarrassing or painful?**

Naturally many patients are anxious about undergoing these types of investigations. It is important to realise that pelvic floor problems are very common and we perform anorectal physiology and ultrasound tests on hundreds of patients each year.

The tests are performed in a private environment where your dignity is respected. You will not feel any discomfort during the tests and there are no risks associated with the procedures.

## **What is the recovery like after the tests?**

The tests do not require any sedation or anaesthetic. You will be able to drive home afterwards and can return to work the same day if you wish.

## **What happens then?**

The nurse assessing you will explain their findings as during your visit. She will compile a report for your surgeon. The tests need to be considered in relation to your clinical symptoms, examination findings and other tests.

You will receive a clinic appointment to come back and see the surgeon who referred you. He or she will then be able to advise you on the test results and the options available for treatment.

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