Rectal dilatation

Information for patients
Radiology
The purpose of this leaflet is to give you all the necessary information regarding the procedure that you will be having. In it, we explain what is involved and the possible risks. The leaflet should not replace the discussion that you have with your doctor before deciding to have this procedure but we do hope that it helps you to have a more informed discussion. It is very important that you understand what the procedure entails and that you feel comfortable before you sign the consent form.

**What is rectal dilatation?**

The rectum is a muscular tube that forms the last part of your large bowel. If the rectum gets narrowed, passing faeces becomes difficult and you may become severely constipated. Then the narrow part has to be stretched to allow proper bowel function. The procedure to stretch the rectum is called rectal dilatation.

**Why do I need a rectal dilatation?**

Rectal dilation is usually considered for people whose bowel function has been impaired by a narrowing of their rectum. You will have had other tests such as a diagnostic endoscopy (camera test) or a barium enema (X-ray of the bowel) that show that your rectum has become narrowed. Your doctor will have already discussed with you the most likely cause of the narrowing but this is usually the result of previous bowel surgery. Stretching of the rectum has been proposed as the best treatment option for you to improve your bowel function.

**Who will be doing the procedure and where?**

A specialist Radiologist with expertise in the procedure will be doing the procedure. The procedure is done in the Radiology Department in a special 'screening' room.

A nurse and a radiographer will also be in the room to assist you and the Radiologist.
What is the preparation for the procedure?

For this procedure, you need to be in hospital a few hours before it is done, as we will need to carry out a routine clinical examination and have some bloods taken.

Your bowel needs to be as empty as possible so that we can clearly see where the narrowing in your rectum is. Therefore, we will ask you not to eat solid food from midnight the night before you come in and to have nothing but clear fluids (water, diluted orange or lemon squash, black tea or coffee) for six hours before the procedure. In addition, the nurses on the ward will need to give you a phosphate enema to clear out as much faeces from your system as possible.

Please let us know if you have any allergies.

Will I need to stop taking my medication?

No, you should continue all your medications except any medications that make your blood thinner (anticoagulants) such as warfarin. If you're a diabetic on insulin you must let your hospital doctor know at least 3 days before you have the procedure.

How long will I need to be in hospital?

You will need to be in hospital for as much as 1 day and occasionally overnight. The procedure itself usually lasts 30 - 40 minutes and afterwards you will be taken back to the ward on a trolley or on your bed. Your pulse and blood pressure will be monitored during and after the procedure for a few hours to make sure that there are no problems before you go home.
Will it hurt?

Unfortunately, it may hurt a little as the rectum opens up, but in the majority of cases the discomfort disappears after 24 - 48 hours. We ask the ward nurses to give you pain killers before you have your procedure to help keep you comfortable. Please tell us if you have any pain so that we can control it with painkillers.

What are the possible complications?

Rectal dilatation is generally a safe procedure but, as with any medical treatment, complications can arise and we need to make you aware of the risks. The kinds of problems that people can experience include:

**Bleeding and perforation** - Occasionally, a little bleeding can occur during the procedure but this is rarely a problem. Even more rare is that the dilatation procedure causes a tear in the bowel wall, this is called a perforation. This is a serious condition and, if you are affected by it, it may mean you have to have an emergency operation to repair the tear. This is why it is important that you tell us about any severe or prolonged pains in your abdomen and blood loss from your anus. It is also why we ask the ward staff to observe you quite closely for a few hours after the procedure.

**Infection** - A perforation of the bowel can lead to an infection in your abdomen. We give you antibiotics into a vein in your arm before the procedure to reduce the risk of infection.

Despite the above-mentioned complications the risks are small, the procedure is generally safe and it will almost certainly result in a great improvement in your ability to eat.
**Constipation** - This tends to be more of a problem if you are older. You can reduce the effects of this if you eat plenty of fruit and vegetables and drink lots of fluid in the few days before and after the procedure. If the constipation continues for more than a couple of days after the procedure you might need to take a mild laxative, which you can buy over the counter, for example senna-based products.

**Allergic reaction** - A rare side effect is an allergic reaction to the barium liquid. People who have had this allergic reaction report that they suffered with things like migraine and a skin rash. If this occurs while you are in the X-ray department we will advise what you should do but if it occurs when you are at home you should see your GP.

**What happens on the day of the procedure?**

On the day of the procedure we will give you some painkillers so that you are kept comfortable throughout the test. We will also give you some antibiotics through a needle in your vein. This helps to minimise the risk of infection.

Next, a hospital porter will bring you to the X-ray department and once there, a staff nurse will ask you some questions to ensure that you have been properly prepared for the procedure.
What happens during the procedure?

For this procedure, you will need to lie on your back or on your left side on a special X-ray table; the nurse will help you into the correct position.

A small soft lubricated tube will be inserted into your bottom (anus) by your radiologist, some clear barium solution will be gently run into your rectum through this tube, which will allow your radiologist to see the narrowing in your rectum properly.

A tube (catheter) and a very fine guide wire covered in lubricating jelly will be passed into your bowel through your anus and through the narrowed area, X-rays will be used to ensure the wire and catheter tube are in the correct place.

Once this is established, a special tube called a dilating tube is inserted over the guide wire and slipped down the rectum into the narrowed area. This special dilating tube has a small balloon that can be inflated once it is in the narrowing. This will be inflated by putting some liquid that shows up on X-ray down the tube and after a few minutes it is deflated and taken out. This may be repeated again if more stretching of the rectum is needed. The tube and guide wire are then taken out of your rectum. Finally, another soft lubricated tube is inserted and a final check with the barium solution, just like at the beginning, will determine whether the procedure has been successful.

How soon after the procedure can I eat and drink?

Most patients will be able to eat and drink straight after the procedure but your radiologist or your ward doctor will confirm this after the procedure.

We recommend that, as soon after your procedure as you are able, you drink plenty of fluid and eat a healthy diet with lots of fruit and vegetables. This will help prevent your having future problems with constipation.
Is there anything I should look out for when I go home?

Usually any complications are evident within the first 4 hours after the procedure. However, when you go home if you have any severe abdominal / stomach pain, bleeding from your rectum or feel feverish and have a high temperature you should seek medical attention. You can contact your GP or go to Accident and Emergency.

Who should I contact if I have any concerns?

If you have any concerns or queries either before or after this procedure please don't hesitate to contact the X-ray department for more details. You can contact one of the nursing staff on the following number.

X-Ray Department

- 0114 271 4726