
What is a Defecating Proctogram?

- A Defecating Proctogram is an MRI study that shows how the rectum, anal canal and muscles of the pelvic floor change during defecation (emptying your bowel).
- It evaluates disorders of the lower bowel and pelvic floor muscles, which cannot be diagnosed with other tests such as a colonoscopy.
- An MRI scanner is a short tunnel that is open at both ends. It uses a powerful magnet, radiowaves and a computer to produce images. It does not use ionizing radiation like in an X-ray or CT scan.
- While awkward, it can provide valuable information that may aid your doctor in diagnosing your problem.

When is it used?

- The act of defecation is the voluntary evacuation of stool, which involves a complex interplay of muscles and nerves, all controlled by the nervous system.
- In some people, this voluntary control can be compromised, and a Defecating Proctogram is used to gather more information about the condition or conditions responsible.
- It may be requested by your specialist if you are dealing with any of the following symptoms:
 - Pelvic floor dysfunction
 - Pelvic organs prolapse
 - Urinary incontinence

- Faecal incontinence
- Constipation
- Descending perineal syndrome
- Some diagnoses that a Defecating Proctogram can detect include:
 - Internal or external rectal prolapse
 - Rectocele
 - Anismus (inappropriate spasm of the anal sphincter)

What do I need to do before the scan?

- The day before the scan you will be asked to take a strong laxative called Picolax to ensure your bowel is empty for the scan. This will be sent to you with your appointment letter.
- You may eat normally, and please ensure you drink plenty of water, at least 150 mL every hour.
- You should continue to take all your regular medications.
- If you suspect you are pregnant, please contact the Radiology department ahead of your scan. While there is no evidence that MRI is unsafe in pregnancy, as a precaution, we do not carry out MRI scans that are non-essential in pregnant persons.
- You will be provided with an MRI safety questionnaire. Please take your time to read through and complete this questionnaire. It asks about any metal implants, artificial joints, stents or electronic devices. If you answer yes to any questions, please contact the Radiology department to ask for advice.

What does it involve?

- You will be asked to attend the Royal Gwent MRI Reception on Floor 3, 10 minutes before your appointment time.
- A member of the team will explain, go through the MRI questionnaire again, and answer any questions.
- You will be shown to a private cubicle and asked to change into a gown. Please do not wear any jewellery, as these need to be removed prior to the scan. You will be given a locker to store any valuables and clothes.

- Once ready, you will be shown to the MRI room and asked to lie down on top of the scanning bed. A member of the team will insert a small catheter into your rectum and fill it with clear lubricant jelly.
- The table will then move into the scanner and take a series of images. You will be asked to perform a squeeze manoeuvre as if you are trying to stop urinating and finally be asked to empty your bowel onto absorbent paper placed beneath you. As your rectum has been cleaned, you will only be passing the lubricant jelly.
- Images of your pelvis are then taken at rest and while you are straining, squeezing, and during defecation.
- The MRI scanner can make loud knocking sounds as the magnet turns on and off. You will be given headphones to wear during the procedure
- It normally takes around 20-30 minutes to complete the investigation. You will be alone in the room, but the radiographer will be able to see, speak and hear you at all times.
- After the exam, you will be shown to an area where you will be able to wash, get changed and retrieve your belongings.
- You can eat and drink normally straight after the investigation but may notice some residue on opening your bowels after the use of the rectal jelly. You may drive yourself home.

Are there any risks?

- This is considered a very safe test.
- Some people find the examination difficult because of the enclosed nature of the scanner, causing claustrophobia.
- Mild sedation may sometimes help you to relax. If you feel you may need a sedative, please contact your GP beforehand to provide a prescription as we are unable to provide the tablets ourselves.
- If you do have a sedative, you are advised not to drive, travel alone or work after the scan.

How do I get my results?

- A specialist consultant radiologist will review the images and send a report to the referring consultant.
- The referring consultant will then contact you to discuss the scan results.

For further information about this, please consider reviewing the Pelvic Floor Society website:

<https://thepelvicfloorsociety.co.uk/patients/default.aspx>

**“This document is available in Welsh /
Mae’r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg”**

