

Voiding Cystourethrogram (VCUG) and Cystogram

A voiding cystourethrogram (VCUG) is a video X-ray that lets doctors see how the urinary tract is working. A VCUG involves taking video X-rays while filling the bladder with and emptying it of a liquid solution containing contrast dye. Contrast dye shows up on X-rays, letting doctors see how the urinary tract is working.

A VCUG takes place in an exam room with an X-ray machine, a long table and a television screen. We often explain to patients that the X-ray machine is a large camera for taking pictures inside the body.

A cystogram is exactly the same procedure, except that the patient will not urinate (void) at the end of the exam.

Before the Exam

Preparing at Home

Parents can help children prepare for a VCUG or cystogram by helping them practice lying still for 10 to 15 minutes at a time. Parents can also help their children practice holding their breath for short periods. We sometimes ask patients to do this briefly when we take certain pictures.

Screening for Possible Pregnancy

Patients who are pregnant or who believe they could be pregnant should talk to their doctors before having a VCUG or cystogram. Information discussed with a doctor is confidential. In addition, parents or caregivers who are pregnant or believe they might be pregnant shouldn't be in the room during a VCUG or cystogram.

Using Positive Distraction

We help our patients relax by creating a soothing environment. We offer positive distraction technology in our fluoroscopy room. Positive distraction technology helps patients relax during procedures and tests. Patients can choose from a variety of themes, such as baby animals or hot air balloons.

About the Urinary Tract

The urinary tract includes the kidneys, ureters, bladder and urethra. The kidneys make urine, which then travels through tubes called ureters into the bladder. The bladder holds the urine until the body signals the urge to go to the bathroom. Urine travels out of the body through a tube called the urethra.

During the Exam

This section provides basic information about what to expect during a VCUG or cystogram.

Getting Into position

Patients remove their clothing and put on hospital gowns. We have private changing areas and lockers to store belongings. Once patients are ready, we help them get into the right position on the exam table. Girls lie in the "frog

position,” with their knees bent and feet together. Boys lie flat on their backs.

Minimizing Radiation Exposure

Our practice is to perform imaging scans correctly and thoroughly, while exposing patients to the smallest amount of radiation possible. We’ll cover parts of the body that don’t need scanning with a protective apron whenever possible.

Exam Preparation

We use liquid soap to clean the area around the urethra. For boys, that means the tip of the penis. For girls, that means the folds of skin between the legs (called the vulva). It might feel cold when we clean the area around the urethra.

After the skin is clean, we’ll slide a soft tube called a catheter into the urethra. Having a catheter inserted can be uncomfortable, and children often need comforting at this time.

The Exam

We’ll dim the lights so that we can see the television screen. We’ll then begin the exam, moving the X-ray machine over the body. The machine won’t touch the body. It will make clicking noises as it takes pictures.

During the exam, we’ll send a liquid mixture called contrast through the catheter and into the bladder. When the bladder is full, we’ll ask the patient to urinate.

Parent/Caregiver Role

Parents or caregivers typically can join their children in the exam room. The most important thing parents and caregivers can do is to help children stay calm during the imaging exam. They can do this by staying calm themselves. When possible, parents can reassure children by talking to them, holding their hands and distracting them with familiar stories or thinking games (spelling, addition, etc.). Parents and caregivers also can prepare the patient for the exam by following the home preparation tips discussed earlier in this piece.

After the Exam

When we have all of the images we need, we’ll check to make sure that the pictures are clear. This takes only a few minutes.

Follow-Up Care

Patients often feel a little sore the first few times they urinate after a VCUG. A warm bath can help the soreness go away more quickly.

Receiving the Results

We typically send the results to a patient’s doctor within 48 hours. If the results are urgent, we’ll contact the doctor immediately.

For More Information

For more information about imaging tests at Gillette, please call the Advanced Imaging Center at 651-229-3995.

[Make An Appointment](#) [651-290-8707](#) [Refer a Patient](#) [651-325-2200](#)

This information is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice of your health care providers. If you have any questions, talk with your doctor or others on your health care team.

If you are a Gillette patient with urgent questions or concerns, please contact Telehealth Nursing at [651-229-3890](#).