

Flow rate test

Information and advice for patients

Urology

What is a flow rate test?

A flow rate test is a test to measure the rate at which you pass urine and the amount you pass. It is carried out to assess the changes you have experienced in your usual flow of urine. After your flow rate test, you may also need to have an ultrasound scan of your bladder (bladder scan).

What is the benefit of the test?

The benefit of the test is that it will enable your doctor to assess how well you are emptying your bladder. The benefit of the bladder scan is that it will show how much urine is left in your bladder after you have emptied it. This will help your doctor/nurse to decide on the most appropriate treatment or further tests for you.

Are there any risks to this test?

There is a small risk that in some patients the sodium (salt) level in the body may become very low from drinking a lot of water. If you start to feel sick please stop drinking.

What are the risks of not having this test?

If you don't have this test your doctor will not be able to assess your condition properly, and so may not be able to offer you the most appropriate treatment or tests you need. This means that your problem will not improve and could become worse.

Are there any alternative tests?

An alternative to this test is a test called urodynamics, but this is not suitable for everyone. It involves a small tube (catheter) being passed into the bladder which is then filled and the bladder pressure recorded. For more information about this test please see the leaflet 'Urodynamic investigations'.

Preparing for the test

You can eat and drink as normal before your appointment, but we will need you to have a comfortably full bladder for the test so suggest that you drink 1 litre (2 pints) of water 1 hour before your appointment.

When you arrive for your appointment please do not pass urine until you have spoken to the nurse. If you do not feel ready to do the test when you arrive you will be given a drink. Please tell the nurse if you:

- have a history of low sodium
- take water tablets
- have kidney disease

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During the test

During your appointment you will be taken to a private room and asked to pass urine into a special machine which measures how fast it is passed. After this, if you need to have a bladder scan, you will be asked to lie down on a bed/couch.

Some jelly will be applied to your tummy and an ultrasound probe will be passed over it to produce a picture of your bladder on a screen. This will show any urine that is left in your bladder.

After the test

You will be able to go home and return to your normal activities straight after the test. The nurse or doctor may speak to you about the results before you leave or may write to you with the results or offer you a follow-up appointment.

Contact details

Please contact your urologist's secretary if you have any questions or concerns about this test. You can contact them by calling the hospital switchboard and asking for them.

Hospital switchboard

0121 554 3801

Further information

For more information about bladder problems:

Bladder and Bowel Foundation

www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org

Helpline: 0845 345 0165

British Association of Urological Surgeons

www.baus.org.uk/patients

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our website www.swbh.nhs.uk or follow us on Twitter @SWBHnhs.

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Sources used for the information in this leaflet

- National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, CG97 'The management of lower urinary tract symptoms in men', May 2010
- National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, CG40 'Urinary incontinence: The management of urinary incontinence in women', October 2006
- NHS Evidence Clinical Knowledge Summaries, 'Hyponatraemia', January 2011

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact the communications department on 0121 507 5420 or email: swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net



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