Having a Hysterosalpingogram

Department of Radiology
Information for Patients

Radiology Leaflet No. 10

University Hospitals of Leicester
NHS Trust
Introduction

Please read your appointment letter carefully to check which hospital you must attend for your appointment. This leaflet tells you about your examination. Please read it carefully as it contains important information and instructions.

What is a hysterosalpingogram?

A hysterosalpingogram (pronounced hys-tero-salping-ogram) is a specialised form of x-ray that produces images of a woman’s uterus (womb) and fallopian (uterine) tubes. It helps to assess the size and shape of the uterus and also to check whether or not the fallopian tubes are open. These cannot be seen on plain X-ray films and so an X-ray dye is used to outline them. Your doctor will have taken into account your symptoms and decided that this is the best examination for your particular problem.

What are the benefits of having a hysterosalpingogram?

This examination shows if there are any blockages in your fallopian tubes and may give some information about your womb which will help your gynecologist to make a diagnosis about your problem.
How to prepare for your hysterosalpingogram

• This examination should usually be done within the 1st 12 days of your cycle. You will be asked the date of your last period before the examination starts, so please bring this information with you.

• It is very important that there is no possibility of pregnancy at the time of the examination because X-rays may damage the unborn child. You should avoid sexual intercourse between your last period and the examination to avoid any possibility of pregnancy. Before the procedure begins you will be asked to confirm that you are not pregnant.

• Some patients find it helpful to take a simple painkiller (such as paracetamol and / or ibuprofen) 30 minutes before the appointment time. This will not interfere with the test in any way and may help with any discomfort during the examination.

• You may find it helpful for someone to drive you home after the examination.

• Please bring a sanitary towel with you for use afterwards.

What should you do if you have irregular or absent periods?

If you do not have periods or have irregular periods please tell us by phoning the Radiology Department on the telephone number in your appointment letter. You will be asked to contact your referring GP or physician who might recommend some more tests to make sure you are not pregnant.
Important information

You should have had a test done to check for Chlamydia before this examination is booked. If you have not had this test done already please contact the doctor who referred you for this examination as soon as possible. If we do not have the results we will not be able to do the examination.

Who will be doing the examination?

The examination will be performed by a radiologist (a doctor who specialises in diagnosis using X-rays), a specialist nurse or specialist radiographer. During the examination there will also be a radiographer and sometimes a nurse or assistant in the room. As we are a teaching hospital, a student may also be present. If you wish, you can request that the student is not present during your examination.

What happens during the examination?

When you arrive at the Radiology Department you will be directed to the relevant waiting area. You will be shown to a cubicle, asked to undress and change into a hospital gown. A specialist member of staff will explain the procedure to you and you will be asked to sign a consent form to confirm that you understand the examination and also to confirm that you are not pregnant. This may happen in the X-ray room and you may ask any questions that you have about the procedure.
What happens during the examination? (continued)

You will be taken into the X-ray room and asked to lie on the X-ray table. The member of staff performing the procedure will perform an internal vaginal examination with a speculum and insert a small tube into the cervix. This is similar to having a smear test. You may experience a cramp-like feeling as the tube is introduced into the cervix.

A small amount of a contrast agent (a colourless liquid that shows up on X-rays) will be introduced to outline the uterus and fallopian tubes. X-ray pictures will be taken at this time.

You may feel some discomfort during this procedure but it is rarely severe. You should tell the member of staff who is with you if it is particularly uncomfortable. You will not be sedated at all.

How long will it take?

A hysterosalpingogram examination takes between 15 to 20 minutes. The time will vary slightly for each patient.

What if my tubes are blocked?

In some cases it may be possible to try and unblock your tubes using a procedure called selective salpingography and tubal recanalisation. This will not be performed at the same time, but at a later date, usually after discussion with your gynaecologist. If this is the case it will be explained to you either at the time or at a later date by your gynaecologist. You will be given an opportunity to ask any questions.
What happens after the examination?

You may be asked to wait in the Radiology Department for a short time after the examination to make sure that you feel comfortable. Any contrast agent that remains in your uterus will gradually leak out through the vagina, due to gravity. Any contrast agent left in your pelvis will be absorbed safely by your body. Only a small amount of contrast is used during examination and it has no smell or colour.

You may experience some cramping after the examination and some minor ‘spotting’ (light bleeding). Both should settle in a couple of days. You will be provided with a sanitary towel for use afterwards although you may like to bring your own.

Do not use tampons during this time as these can be a source of infection.

Are there any possible side effects or complications?

Most women experience only minor side effects. These may include sticky vaginal discharge as some of the fluid drains out of the uterus, slight vaginal bleeding, cramps, feeling dizzy, faint or sick.

Serious problems are rare. They may include an allergic reaction to the contrast agent, injury to the uterus or pelvic infection. Rarely if you have chronic tubal infection the injection of the contrast agent can make this worse.

You should contact your doctor if you are unwell after the procedure and in particular if you have any of these symptoms, vomiting, fainting, severe abdominal pain or cramping, heavy vaginal bleeding, fever or chills.
How do I get the results?

The results will not usually be given to you immediately. Your X-ray images will be studied by a radiologist and the results will be sent to the doctor who referred you for this examination.

Background radiation

The radiation that you are exposed to during this examination, like the radiation used during any other X-ray test, passes through you immediately. You are not radioactive and it is not necessary to take any precautions after this examination.

The risk of having X-rays is very small indeed. We are all exposed to natural background radiation every day of our lives. This comes from the sun, food we eat and the ground. Each examination gives a dose on top of this natural background radiation.

The risks of radiation are slightly higher for the unborn child so we must ask female patients aged 10 to 55 years about their menstrual history. The radiation from the X-rays during a hysterosalpingogram is equivalent to receiving a few weeks of natural background radiation. The benefits of this examination outweigh any potential risk. We will take all safeguards to minimise the amount of X-rays you receive.
Support for people with learning disabilities

There is support available in our hospitals for patients with learning disabilities. Please contact the learning disability specialist nursing team on (0116) 258 4382 telling them when the appointment is and what examination has been booked.

Other sources of information

Websites
For general information about radiology departments visit the Royal College of Radiologists website: www.goingfora.com
For information about the effects of x-rays read the NRPB publication: ‘X-rays how safe are they’, on the Health Protection Agency website: www.HPA.org.uk
Please note that the views expressed in these websites, do not necessarily reflect the views of UHL or the NHS.
University Hospitals of Leicester website:
www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk
NHS Direct:
For health advice or information you can call NHS on: 111.
How was it for you?

If you wish to make any comments or suggestions regarding your visit to the Radiology Department please fill in a suggestion form or speak to a member of staff. Suggestion forms are located in all waiting areas within the department.

University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust also has a Patient Information and Liaison Service (PILS), and you are welcome to contact them on:

Freephone: 08081 788337
email: pils.complaints.compliments@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

We review our information leaflets on a regular basis. If you have any comments about how we can improve these leaflets please speak to a member of staff.

Directions and car parking

Hospital car parking is available to all hospital patients and visitors. Spaces are limited so please allow plenty of time to find a car parking space. Parking charges are payable, please check tariff boards or the hospital website for full details. As well as the hourly rates there are a range of saver tickets available for patients and prime carers. Dedicated disabled parking bays are also available.

Marked disabled bays exist outside of the public car parks for which there is no charge. If you park in the car parks the fee will apply.

Drop off bays exist at the main entrances, these bays have a 20 minutes maximum stay.

Certain qualifying benefits as notified by the Department of Social Security entitle the patient to free or reduced parking. For more information contact the Cashiers office.
Bus services to the hospital

Our aim is to ensure that there are car parking spaces available for those who really need to use them. We encourage you to use public transport or walk to the hospital if you are fit and well.

For information on bus routes and times contact Traveline on 0871 200 2233. Our Hospital Hopper shuttle bus service links our three hospitals with Beaumont Leys Centre, Hamilton Centre, the Railway station and St Nicolas Place (Park and Ride hub). The buses run from 6:30am until 7pm every 30 minutes from Monday to Friday. The nationally recognised concessions are valid on buses in Leicester including the Hospital Hopper. Contact the UHL Travelwise Manager on 0116 258 3796 for more information on the Hospital Hopper.

Relatives and escorts

You may wish to bring a friend or relative to accompany you to and from the Radiology Department when you have your examination although they may not always be allowed into the examination room. This may be useful if you do not understand English very well or if you have any special needs.

Children

Baby changing facilities are available. Please ask to be shown to them if you wish to use them.

We are unable to offer childcare facilities. If you need to bring your children with you, please bring along an adult who can supervise them whilst your examination is being carried out. Radiology staff are not able to supervise your children.
Facilities available

**Refreshments:** Refreshments including hot and cold drinks are available in the hospital. Please ask a member of staff for directions.

**Shops:** Each hospital contains a shop selling magazines, newspapers, sweets and drinks. Please ask a member of staff for directions.

Any questions?

If you have any questions write them down here to remind you what to ask when you speak to your consultant or radiologist.

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Today’s research is tomorrow’s care

We all benefit from research. Leicester’s Hospitals is a research active Trust so you may find that research is happening when you visit the hospital or your clinic.

If you are interested in finding out how you can become involved in a clinical trial or to find out more about taking part in research, please speak to your clinician or GP.

If you would like this information in another language or format, please contact the service equality manager on 0116 250 2959