Bowel transit study in adults
Information for patients

Diagnostic Imaging Department
X-Ray and Scanning

Specialist Support
If you require this leaflet in another language, large print or another format, please contact the Health Information Centre Tel: (023) 9228 6757, who will advise you.
What is a bowel transit study?
A bowel transit study, sometimes called a “shapes test”, is a test to find out how long it takes faeces (waste matter) to pass through your colon (large bowel). We have sent you a capsule filled with 20 plastic markers. These markers will pass through your bowel and show up on the abdominal x-ray taken 3 days later. Depending on how long the shapes take to travel through your bowel a further abdominal x ray is sometimes needed two days after this.

What if I cannot attend for my appointment?
If your appointment is not convenient please contact X-ray and Scanning on 023 9228 6000 ext: 4110 (Mon-Fri 08.30-17.30) so that a more appropriate time can be arranged.

Preparation
• You are required to take the capsule we have sent you on a Sunday night. (The first abdominal x ray is taken on the following Wednesday, and if required, the second x ray on the Friday.)
• If you are vegetarian the capsule containing the plastic shapes is made of animal gelatine. If you cannot eat gelatine you can open the capsule and swallow the 20 markers with water. The individual markers do not contain gelatine.
• No other preparation is required. You may take any medicines as normal.

For female patients:
If there is any chance you may be pregnant, please contact the department.

Can I bring a relative or friend?
Yes, but for reasons of safety, they will not be able to accompany you into the examination room except in very special circumstances.
Where should I come for the bowel transit study?
Please come to:
X Ray and Scanning, C Level, Queen Alexandra Hospital.

On arrival in the department please report to Reception and you will be directed to the patient waiting area.

Who will I see?
You will be seen by a radiographer and/or radiographic assistant.

During the examination
• You will be asked to lie flat on your back on the x ray examination table. The radiographer will position you and ask you to briefly hold your breath while the x ray is taken.
• If there are any shapes still remaining on this x ray, you will need to return to the department for a further abdominal x-ray on the Friday.

How long will it take?
The x ray only takes a few minutes but please allow to be in the department for 20 minutes.

When will I get the results?
The clinical team who referred you for the test will make the follow up arrangements.

Are there any after effects?
No.

Can I drive home?
Yes.

What are the risks of a shapes test?
All x ray procedures involve exposure to radiation in varying amounts. During the shapes test you will have 1 or 2 abdominal x rays. The radiation dose is kept to a minimum.
Who can I contact with queries or concerns?
If you have any questions about your appointment or procedure please contact the number on the front of the leaflet.

Consent - What does this mean
Before any doctor, nurse or therapist examines you they must have your consent or permission. Consent ranges from allowing a doctor to take your blood pressure, (rolling up your sleeve and presenting your arm is implied consent), to signing a form to say you agree to the treatment or operation.

It is important before giving permission that you understand what you are agreeing to. If you do not understand please ask. More detailed information is available on request.

Information we hold about you and your rights under the Data Protection Act
Please refer to the booklet ‘Your Healthcare Information – Your Rights! Our Responsibilities! for further guidance.

How to comment on your treatment
We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer your questions. However, if you have any concerns you can also contact the Patient Experience Service on 0800 917 6039 or E-mail PALS@porthosp.nhs.uk