

Cystogram

WARWIKI

Patient Information · An X-ray of your bladder using a contrast dye

A cystogram is a short X-ray test of your bladder. The bladder is gently filled with a special dye through a catheter so it shows up clearly on X-ray. This helps your surgeon check that a repair has healed and is watertight, or look for a leak, an abnormal connection, or backflow toward the kidneys.

About This Test

The bladder normally cannot be seen well on a plain X-ray. A cystogram fills it with **contrast dye** that shows up white, so the shape of the bladder and how it holds and releases fluid can be checked. Your surgeon may order a cystogram to:

- Confirm a **surgical repair has healed** and does not leak — often before a catheter is removed
- Look for a **leak** after an injury or surgery
- Find an abnormal connection (a **fistula**) between the bladder and another organ
- Check for urine flowing back toward the kidneys (**reflux**)

How the dye goes in depends on your situation:

- If you have **no tube**, a small catheter is placed just for the test.
- If you already have a **urethral catheter** or a **suprapubic tube**, the dye usually goes through it — no new tube is needed.

Is It Safe?

Yes. A cystogram is a common, low-risk test. The amount of X-ray is small, and the water-based dye leaves your body in your urine. Most people feel only fullness or mild pressure. Uncommon side effects — a urine infection, brief burning, or cramping — are usually mild and pass quickly.

LEARN THE TERMS

Cystogram

An X-ray of the bladder taken while it is filled with dye.

Bladder

The muscular sac that stores urine until you urinate.

Contrast dye

A liquid that shows up white on X-ray so the bladder can be seen.

Catheter

A thin, soft tube used to fill the bladder with dye.

Suprapubic tube

A catheter that drains the bladder through the lower belly; the dye can go through it.

Fistula

An abnormal connection between the bladder and another organ that a cystogram can reveal.

Reflux

Urine flowing backward from the bladder toward the kidneys.

Voiding images

Extra X-ray pictures taken while you urinate, when needed.

WILL IT HURT? Most people feel only a sense of fullness or mild pressure as the bladder fills, not sharp pain. If a catheter is placed for the test you may feel brief stinging. The team can slow down or stop at any time — just tell them. The test usually takes about 15–30 minutes.

How to Get Ready (Before Your Test)

There is very little to do to prepare. In most cases:

- You can **eat and drink normally** and take your **usual medicines** unless told otherwise.
- If you have a catheter or suprapubic tube, **leave it in place** — the dye often goes through it.
- You can usually **drive yourself home**, because no sedation is needed.

Tell your team **ahead of time** if you:

- Have ever had a reaction to X-ray contrast dye or iodine
- Take a blood thinner
- Have signs of a urine infection (burning, fever, or cloudy, strong-smelling urine) — an active infection may mean the test is rescheduled

What Happens During the Test

- 1 You lie on an X-ray table. If you do not already have a tube, a small catheter is gently placed; if you have one, it is connected.
- 2 The dye is slowly run into the bladder while X-ray pictures are taken. You may be asked to hold still and breathe normally.
- 3 You may be asked to **urinate** so the team can take pictures of the bladder emptying (when this is part of the test).
- 4 The pictures are reviewed and the catheter is removed — or your existing tube is left in place.

After the Test

- You can usually go home and return to **normal activities right away**.
- You may feel **mild burning when you urinate** for a day or so. Drinking extra water helps and eases this.
- You may notice a **pink tinge** in your urine for a short time. This is common and usually clears within a day.

Call your surgeon's office or seek care if you have:

- A fever or chills
- Trouble urinating, or you cannot urinate at all
- Heavy bleeding, or blood clots in the urine
- Pain or belly cramping that gets worse instead of better

THREE THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. A cystogram is a quick, safe X-ray that fills the bladder with a special dye — it checks that a repair has healed or looks for a leak, fistula, or reflux.
2. There is little to do to prepare. Leave any catheter or suprapubic tube in place, and tell your team about any dye allergy, blood thinners, or signs of a urine infection.
3. Most people feel only fullness and go home right away. Mild burning or a little pink in the urine for a day is normal — drink extra water, and call for fever, heavy bleeding, or trouble urinating.