

# Voiding Cysto Urethrogram (VCUG)

Preparing your child for a bladder test



## What is a VCUG?

A voiding cysto urethrogram (VCUG) is an X-ray of the bladder and urethra. The X-ray pictures taken during a VCUG will show your child's bladder capacity, ability to hold and empty urine and whether the urine moves backward toward the kidneys during urination (reflux).

## Why does my child need a VCUG?

VCUGs are usually done when your child has a bladder or kidney infection, but a doctor can order one for other reasons as well. Your child's doctor may also request that your child give a urine sample so it can be sent to the lab for testing.

## How do we check in for the appointment?

Arrive 30 minutes before your scheduled appointment. Being late can affect other appointments and can delay your appointment.

- Seattle Children's Main Campus, 4800 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle, WA 98105. Use Whale Parking. Check in at Whale 4 registration desk.
- Bellevue Clinic and Surgery Center, 1500 116 Ave. NE, Bellevue, WA 98004. Park in the underground parking garage. Check in at 2nd floor registration desk.

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- Upon arrival, females 12 years and older will be asked to provide a urine sample for pregnancy screening.
- If you will be late or have questions about testing, please call Radiology at 206-987-2089.

### **How is the VCUG done?**

We need to place a small, soft, flexible tube (catheter) in your child's bladder to do a VCUG. This is not very pleasant, but we try to provide great care and privacy. It may help your child to have Mom or Dad there to hold on to. Your child will lie down on the X-ray table. For girls, their legs will be placed in the "frog leg" position while the technologist cleans the opening of the urethra with a cleansing solution. A boy may keep his legs straight.

A numbing lidocaine lubricant may be applied and a small catheter is inserted into the urethra and advanced into the bladder. All urine is drained out. The catheter is then connected to an IV bottle that contains dye (X-ray contrast material). Gravity causes your child's bladder to fill up with the dye. With the catheter still in place, your child will be asked to pee, which will show how the urine goes through the urinary tract. The technologist will need to position your child on their side for some of the X-rays. A doctor will watch this process with a special device called a fluoroscope while the pictures are shown on a TV monitor. When the test is over, the catheter is removed.

### **How long does the test take?**

The test takes about 45 minutes. Your child will need to stay still for the exam so that the pictures come out. This can be hard for children. We use distractions, such as toys, books and music, to help your child stay still. The age of your child helps us plan what tools to use. For children under the age of 1, we often use cloth safety straps or small sand bags to keep them from moving. Parents who are willing and able may be asked to help hold their child as well.

Radiology offers Child Life services. Child Life Specialists are members of the healthcare team who work directly with your child and family to help reduce anxiety and adjust to the hospital experience. When you call to schedule the exam, tell the scheduler if you are interested in having a Child Life Specialist.

### **Will my child have any pain?**

There may be some discomfort when the catheter is put in. We will do all we can to help your child relax and feel more comfortable. The lidocaine lubricant will help reduce the discomfort.

Radiology does not normally give sedation for this exam. This is because the medicine can make it hard for your child to pee. Your child needs to pee during the test so that the doctor can see how your child's bladder works. In special cases, we can use sedation if requested by the referring doctor. The sedation we use relaxes your child and may help them not to remember the procedure, but it does not put them to sleep. Because this sedation requires special preparation and prolonged recovery time, it is mostly used with kids

who have a lot of fear or anxiety about past procedures. If you feel your child needs this sedation, please talk to your primary care (referring) doctor.

### What do I do before this procedure?

- **Breakfast:** No special diet is required before the VCUG test. Give your child breakfast as usual, unless another exam (like an IVP) is also being done that requires a special diet.

### How do I prepare my child for this test?

#### 1. Talk to your child

- Talk about the steps of the test in simple, honest language.
  - “First, you’ll be lying down on the X-ray table. Above you will be the X-ray machine. The machine is above you but does not touch you...”
  - “They will put a small tube into the place where you pee, and they will take the tube out when the test is over.”
  - “The doctors and nurses will put some clear liquid into the tube so that they can see how your body is working on the TV monitor.”
  - “When you feel like you have to go to the bathroom, you can pee.”
- Talk to your child about the important job of holding still for the test.
- Reassure your child that you will be with them during the test.

#### 2. Practice relaxing

After talking about the steps of the test, practice things your child can do if they feel worried or afraid. Discuss these feelings with your child. Some ideas are: taking deep breaths, imagining a favorite place or making up a story. Some children bring a security item, such as a blanket or stuffed animal, with them.

#### 3. Make a written plan together

Write down the plan with your child. This will help your child feel a sense of control. An example of the plan might be:

##### *Tyler’s plan*

- *I want my mom or dad right next to me.*
- *I am going to bring my stuffed bear to hold.*
- *I would like the person doing the test to tell me what the steps are.*
- *My job is to hold myself still like a statue.*

### What happens after the test?

We will clean your child with washcloths and towels, and then they can get re-dressed. Your child may return to normal daily activities.

After having a urinary catheter, your child’s urine may look pink the first

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### To Learn More

- Radiology  
206-987-2089
- Ask your child's  
healthcare provider
- [www.seattlechildrens.org](http://www.seattlechildrens.org)

### Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask  
your child's nurse.
- From outside the  
hospital, call the  
toll-free Family  
Interpreting Line  
1-866-583-1527.  
Tell the interpreter  
the name or extension  
you need.
- For Deaf and hard of  
hearing callers  
206-987-2280 (TTY).

time they urinate. This is caused by a small amount of blood in the urine. This is normal, but if it lasts longer than 24 hours, or if your child has a hard time urinating, call your child's primary care doctor.

Give your child extra fluids to drink so that they go to the bathroom more often. This will help with any irritation or burning sensations that can happen after having a catheter.

### Other important information

- Please tell the technologist if your child has any allergies or sensitivities to latex products or dye (X-ray contrast).
- Although we encourage parents to be with their child during the test, siblings are not allowed in the exam room. Please keep this in mind when you plan your visit.
- Pregnant women cannot be in the exam room. If you are pregnant and wanted to be with your child, discuss an alternative plan with the technologist ahead of time.

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Seattle Children's offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

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