

Preparing your child for a VCUG

A voiding cystourethrogram (VCUG), is a way your doctor can learn more about how your child's body works by examining pictures of several organs of the urinary tract (bladder, ureters and kidneys).

Parent's Role

Since your child trusts you most, it is important to explain what to expect during this hospital visit. For younger children, it is best to explain right before coming in for the test. If you would like our help explaining what they can expect, please call (256) 265-7705 to speak with a pediatric nurse or child life specialist.

Research has shown that parental presence during a hospital experience makes a child feel more comfortable. We encourage and welcome your presence to provide your child with support during the test. Pregnant mothers or anyone under the age of 18 will have to wait outside or behind the shield in the room during the procedure. In this case, we ask that another familiar adult stay with your child during the procedure to help comfort them. We recommend that other siblings not be present during the test.

Comfort items such as a pacifier, bottle, blanket, stuffed animal, book or toy are encouraged.



During the test

Your child will be asked to change into a hospital gown and lie on the exam table. There are no shots or needles involved in this test.

Pain free sedation is available for children between 18 months and 7 years of age. If requested, older children may be sedated. Our nurse can answer questions you may have regarding sedation.

A nurse will clean your child's genitals with a cotton swab and betadine solution. A catheter, a small flexible tube, then will be inserted into the urethra. Your child will be asked to take deep breaths to reduce discomfort and help relax the muscles surrounding the tube. A small piece of tape will be placed over the catheter to secure it in place.

The X-ray camera will then be placed over your child. The camera will come close to your child but it will not touch them. The catheter will then be connected to a bottle of liquid called contrast. Your child's bladder will slowly fill with the liquid and it will feel cool and bubbly. Pictures will be taken of your child's bladder and kidneys. Your child may feel like they have to urinate, but they need to hold it until the bladder is full.

When the necessary pictures are taken, your child will be asked to urinate while lying on the table. Although this doesn't feel normal for the child, assure your child that it is okay and they will not be in trouble. As your child urinates, towels will be used to collect the liquid. It will feel cold instead of warm like urine.

Preparing your child for a VCUG (continued)

How can you help prepare your child?

Be Positive – When talking to your child about what to expect, focus on the positive aspects of having a VCUG: “The pictures will help the doctor take care of your body.”

Set your child up for success – You could say, “You’re going to do great today,” or “I know that you’re going to work very hard to help the doctor take good pictures.”

Focus on the end – Some families like to plan one of the child’s favorite activities to do together when the test is over. This gives the child something to look forward to. It doesn’t have to cost any money – try going to look at the hospital’s Tram or playing on the playground.

Use familiar words – Try to use simple words, like “silly pee pee test” rather than “VCUG,” “skinny tube” instead of “catheter,” “pictures” rather than “X-rays,” “private area” instead of “genitals” and “cold brown soap” rather than “betadine solution.”

Assign “jobs” to your child – Remind your child the doctor needs his or her help, and assign jobs including:

- Lying still for the pictures.
- Make frog legs or butterfly wings (knees bent out with the bottoms of their feet touching).
- Perform the “silly pee pee test” in the bathtub.
- Practice relaxation and distraction exercises.
- The more you practice, the better!

After the test

- After all the pictures have been taken, your child can clean up and get dressed.
- Encourage your child to drink extra fluids in order to urinate more frequently. This will help with any irritation or burning sensations that occasionally occur after having a catheter.

- The results from the procedure will be sent to your child’s doctor within a few days. Your child’s doctor will contact you to discuss the results.

For NPO guidelines or additional information, visit huntsvillehospital.org/pediatricinfo or call (256) 265-7705.

