What is a VCUG?

A VCUG (voiding cystourethrogram) is a type of X-ray picture taken of the bladder and urethra during urination (pictures that are taken while you pee). A nurse will place a small, flexible tube into the place where you pee. You need this tube so that special water, called contrast, can be put into your bladder. This contrast helps the doctors see your bladder in the pictures they are taking.

Why do I have to have a VCUG?

You need a VCUG to make sure your bladder and kidneys are working okay. It lets us know if you have “reflux” (if urine backs up into your kidneys when you pee).

What happens first?

When you come to the hospital, you will check in at the Diagnostic & Therapy Center on the first floor. Before going to your room, you will have your vitals checked (how much you weigh, your temperature and blood pressure). You will then go to your room and meet your nurse. She will ask you and your parents a few questions and if you want, you can change into special hospital pajamas. Your nurse may have you take some medicine to help you relax. While waiting, you can play with some of the toys you may have brought or ask for a movie.

What happens next?

When it’s time for your nurse to put the little tube in, you will lie down on the bed in your room. If you are a girl, you will sit with your feet together and your knees out, like a frog or butterfly wings. If you are a boy, you will lie on your back with your legs straight. You can practice before they start. The nurse will clean the area where you “pee.” This will feel cold and wet. The nurse or doctor will put a thin, flexible tube, into the place where you “pee.” This tube looks like a small straw. This can feel uncomfortable. It may be helpful to sing, take deep breaths or count during this. What do you think will help you? It only takes a minute, and you will be covered up as soon as the tube is in. Don’t forget, your mom and dad will be right by your side!

How does the VCUG work?

Once the tube is in, it’s time for your special pictures to be taken. You will go to a different part of the hospital, G.I. Radiology. There you will meet a technologist who will help the doctor with the test. You will get up onto a skinny table like in the picture above. The table is hard, but there will be a sheet and pillow under you. Your mom and dad (or caregiver) will need to put on a special apron for this test. The technologist will use an x-ray camera to take a picture of your belly. While the doctor is looking at that picture, the technologist will hook the special water up to the tube your nurse put in. This will not hurt.

A different camera will be pulled over you, just like in the picture. This camera will not touch you but it does make beeping and whirring noises.

Special water will run through the tube into your bladder. You will be able to see this on what looks like a TV screen. The only thing you need to do during this time is lie still.

When your bladder gets really full and you feel like you have to go to the bathroom, the doctor will have you roll onto each side and take more pictures.

The doctor will have you pee into a special potty right on the table, and they will take more pictures. As you start to go “pee,” the thin tube will come out. You shouldn’t feel the tube come out! When they are done taking the pictures, you can get up and get dressed. Good Job! You should be proud of yourself!