

# Anorectal Physiology Studies following an Obstetric Anal Sphincter Injury during Childbirth

**This leaflet explains Anorectal Physiology studies, including the benefits, risks, any alternatives and what you can expect during your appointment when you come to hospital.**

**If you have any further questions, please speak to the health professional caring for you.**

## Why do I need Anorectal Physiology studies?

During the birth of your baby, you had a tear to your perineum that extended to your anal sphincter muscles. This type of tear is known as an Obstetric Anal Sphincter Injury (OASI) or a 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> degree tear. Anorectal physiology studies include an ultrasound of your sphincter muscles and pressure tests to see how well your muscles are working since the birth of your baby. The results of these studies can help to make decisions about any future births and can help decide how we can help you manage any symptoms as well as the most appropriate course of treatment.

## What are Anorectal Physiology Studies?

These tests assess the strength and function of the anal sphincter muscles. The tests also look at the coordination of these muscles and the volume the rectum can hold. It also involves taking an ultrasound image of the anal canal to assess for any abnormalities.

## What happens during the test?

You will be asked detailed questions about your symptoms and you may be asked to complete symptom score sheets.

The whole appointment will take approximately one hour.

After a history has been taken, we will commence the tests. There are two tests that we perform, which will take approximately 30 minutes. The tests do not require sedation or anaesthetic and you will be free to leave when they are complete.

We will ask you to lie on your left-hand side. The first test involves inserting a small catheter (tube) a few centimetres into your back passage.

We will ask you to perform certain manoeuvres to test the strength of your sphincters such as squeezing and coughing. We will then inflate a small balloon that is attached to the catheter to assess sensation.

To assess the coordination of your anal muscles we will ask you to push down on the balloon.

The second part of the test is an endoanal ultrasound scan. This takes an ultrasound image of the anal muscles. A tube, about 2cm in diameter is inserted a few centimetres into the back passage.

## **What are the risks?**

There are no risks associated with anorectal physiology studies.

## **Will I feel any pain?**

The test may seem embarrassing for you but it is a common test performed by our department and we always maintain your privacy and dignity. The test should not be painful but may feel uncomfortable. If you are in pain, please let the staff member performing your tests know and they will stop.

## **Are there any alternatives?**

Currently, there are no alternative assessments that will help us to obtain the same or similar information.

## **How can I prepare for Anorectal Physiology Studies?**

There is no preparation required for this test. You may eat and drink as normal before the test. Please continue to take your usual medication.

**For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit <https://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/patient-information-public/>**

## **Was this information helpful? Yes / No**

**Please let us know, contact [patient.information@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@stgeorges.nhs.uk) and include the leaflet title.**

**Thank you.**

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## **Additional services**

### **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about

our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm. Friday between 10am and 2pm.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings.

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### **NHS UK**

The NHS provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### **NHS 111**

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

**Tel:** 111

### **AccessAble**

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website ([www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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