



(DRE) Digital Rectal Exam

A digital rectal exam (DRE) is a test for both men and women. It allows a doctor to check the lower rectum, pelvis, and lower belly for cancer and other health problems including: Prostate cancer in men, Blood in the stool or an abnormal mass in the anus or rectum, Uterine or ovarian cancer in women, along with a vaginal examination.

Why do I need a DRE? A doctor may perform a DRE as a part of a routine medical examination. Or a person may need a DRE if he or she has symptoms such as rectal bleeding, a change in bowel habits, urethral discharge or bleeding, or a change in urine stream.

What will happen during the procedure? For men: the doctor will ask you to either stand and bend forward at the waist or lie on your side on an exam table with your knees pulled up to your chest in the fetal position. To start the exam, the doctor will gently insert a lubricated, gloved finger into your rectum. He or she may ask you to relax and take a deep breath as the DRE begins. The doctor will determine the size of the prostate and feel for bumps, soft or hard spots, or other abnormalities. The doctor will also examine the wall of the lower colon/rectum.

For Women: The doctor will usually ask you to lie on your back on an exam table and put your feet in a raised stirrup. He or she may ask you to relax and take a deep breath before gently inserting a lubricated, gloved finger into your rectum. The goal is to feel reproductive organs and the bowel. The doctor may also feel abnormalities in the internal organs by applying pressure on the lower abdomen or pelvic area with the other hand.

Is it painful? A DRE is generally not painful, but it may be uncomfortable. If your prostate is enlarged, you may feel some discomfort or mild pain during the exam, but pain is unusual. You may also feel the need to urinate.