What is a VCUG?

It is a study to examine the bladder and the tubes that connect the kidneys to the bladder.

Why is it done?

It is done to determine if the baby has a condition called “reflux.” You might have heard that reflux occurs in the stomach, but reflux can occur between the kidneys and the bladder too! When a baby pees, the urine should flow out of the bladder through the urethra and out of the body. If a baby has reflux, the urine can also wash back up to the kidneys. Babies who have reflux are more likely to develop urinary tract infections and may need to take antibiotics to prevent them.

Why do both a renal ultrasound and a VCUG need to be done?

A renal ultrasound shows the shape and size of the bladder and kidneys, but can’t detect reflux. The VCUG shows how urine travels through the system and is the best way to detect reflux.

How is it performed?

A catheter is inserted into the tube (urethra) that drains the bladder to the opening of the body. A liquid flows through this catheter and fills the bladder. A special Xray then helps the doctor see if the liquid moves back up into the kidneys as the baby pees.

What are the risks?

The VCUG is a very safe procedure, however, it does expose the baby to a small amount of radiation. In rare cases, an infection might occur from the catheter into the opening of the body that drains the urine, or damage might be done to the urethra. However, every step is taken to help prevent this from happening. Also, there is not any radioactive material in the liquid contrast that flows into the bladder.