Urethrectomy (removal of the male urethra or water pipe): procedure-specific information

What is the evidence base for this information?
This leaflet includes advice from consensus panels, the British Association of Urological Surgeons, the Department of Health and evidence-based sources; it is, therefore, a reflection of best practice in the UK. It is intended to supplement any advice you may already have been given by your GP or other healthcare professionals. Alternative treatments are outlined below and can be discussed in more detail with your Urologist or Specialist Nurse.

What does the procedure involve?
Removal of the male urethra (water pipe) because of cancer or the risk of cancer development, usually performed through an incision in the perineum (behind the scrotum).

What are the alternatives to this procedure?
Radiotherapy to try to kill or prevent cancer in the urethra, conservative treatment

What should I expect before the procedure?
If you are taking Aspirin or Clopidogrel on a regular basis, you must discuss this with your urologist because these drugs can cause increased bleeding after surgery. There may be a balance of risk where stopping them will reduce the chances of bleeding but this can result in increased clotting, which may also carry a risk to your health. This will, therefore, need careful discussion with regard to risks and benefits.
You will usually be admitted on the day before surgery. Your general fitness, to screen for the carriage of MRSA will be assessed and sometimes some baseline investigations performed prior to your admission. This can, on occasions, be done by telephone or you may be asked to attend a pre-admission clinic approximately 14 days before your admission, depending on your medical history. After admission, you will be seen by members of the medical team which may include the Consultant, Specialist Registrar, House Officer and your named nurse.

You will be asked not to eat or drink for 6 hours before surgery and, immediately before the operation, you may be given a pre-medication by the anaesthetist which will make you dry-mouthed and pleasantly sleepy.

Please be sure to inform your Urologist in advance of your surgery if you have any of the following:

- an artificial heart valve
- a coronary artery stent
- a heart pacemaker or defibrillator
- an artificial joint
- an artificial blood vessel graft
- a neurosurgical shunt
- any other implanted foreign body
- a prescription for Warfarin, Aspirin or Clopidogrel (Plavix®)
- a previous or current MRSA infection
- high risk of variant CJD (if you have received a corneal transplant, a neurosurgical dural transplant or previous injections of human-derived growth hormone)

**What happens during the procedure?**

Normally a full general anaesthetic will be used and you will be asleep throughout the procedure. In some patients, the anaesthetist may also use an epidural anaesthetic which improves or minimises pain after the operation. You will usually be given injectable antibiotics before the procedure to prevent infection, after checking for any allergies.

In the operation, through a small incision, the urethra will be identified and removed from the level of the prostate just below the arch of the pubic bone to the tip of the penis.

**What happens immediately after the procedure?**

A drainage tube will be placed in the wound to drain fluid away from the internal area where the operation has been done.

After your operation, you may return to the Intensive Care Unit or the Special Recovery area of the operating theatre before returning to the ward. You will normally have a drip in your arm.
You will be encouraged to mobilise as soon as possible after the operation because this encourages the bowel to begin working. We will start you on fluids and food as soon as possible.

We normally use elastic stockings to minimise the risk of a blood clot (deep vein thrombosis) in your legs. A physiotherapist will show you some deep breathing and leg exercises and you will sit out in a chair for a short time after your operation.

The average stay in hospital will last approximately 5-7 days.

Are there any side-effects?
Most procedures have a potential for side-effects. You should be reassured that, although all these complications are well-recognised, the majority of patients do not suffer any problems after a urological procedure.

Please use the check boxes to tick off individual items when you are happy that they have been discussed to your satisfaction:

Common (greater than 1 in 10)
- Wound infection
- Pain or discomfort in the wound
- Failure to achieve overall cure of cancer
- Impotence

Occasional (between 1 in 10 and 1 in 50)
- Anaesthetic or cardiovascular problems possibly requiring intensive care admission (including chest infection, pulmonary embolus, stroke, deep vein thrombosis, heart attack and death)
- Blood loss requiring transfusion or repeat surgery

Rare (less than 1 in 50)
- Rectal injury

Hospital-acquired infection (overall risk for Addenbrooke’s)
- Colonisation with MRSA (0.02%, 1 in 5,000)
- Clostridium difficile bowel infection (0.04%; 1 in 2,500)
- MRSA bloodstream infection (0.01%; 1 in 10,000)

(These rates may be greater in high-risk patients e.g. with long-term drainage tubes, after removal of the bladder for cancer, after previous infections, after prolonged hospitalisation or after multiple admissions)

What should I expect when I get home?
When you leave hospital, you will be given a “draft” discharge summary of your admission. This holds important information about your inpatient stay and your operation. If, in the first few weeks after your discharge, you need to call your GP for any reason or to attend another hospital, please take this summary with
you to allow the doctors to see details of your treatment. This is particularly important if you need to consult another doctor within a few days of your discharge.

You will require pain-killing tablets at home for 2-3 weeks before you are comfortable.

You should avoid driving for at least 6 weeks and, in some patients, it may be even longer before they can safely drive. If your work involves physical activity, you will need at least 6 weeks off work.

Heavy lifting should be avoided for 6 weeks and sexual intercourse for at least a month.

What else should I look out for?
If you develop a temperature, increased redness, throbbing or drainage at the site of the operation, please contact your GP.

Any other post-operative problems should also be reported to your GP, especially if they involve chest symptoms.

Are there any other important points?
It will be at least 14-21 days before the pathology results on your mass become available. It is normal practice for the results of all biopsies to be discussed in detail at a multi-disciplinary meeting before any further treatment decisions are made. You and your GP will be informed of the results after this decision.

Once the results have been discussed, it may be necessary for further treatment but this will be discussed with you by your Consultant or Specialist Nurse.

Driving after surgery
It is your responsibility to ensure that you are fit to drive following your surgery. You do not normally need to notify the DVLA unless you have a medical condition that will last for longer than 3 months after your surgery and may affect your ability to drive. You should, however, check with your insurance company before returning to driving. Your doctors will be happy to provide you with advice on request.

Is there any research being carried out in this field at Addenbrooke’s Hospital?
Yes. As part of your operation, various specimens of tissue will be sent to the Pathology department so that we can find out details of the disease and whether it has affected other areas. This information sheet has already described to you what tissue will be removed.

We would also like your agreement to carry out research on that tissue which will be left over when the pathologist has finished making a full diagnosis. Normally, this tissue is disposed of or simply stored. What we would like to do is to store
samples of the tissue, both frozen and after it has been processed. Please note that we are not asking you to provide any tissue apart from that which would normally be removed during the operation.

We are carrying out a series of research projects which involve studying the genes and proteins produced by normal and diseased tissues. The reason for doing this is to try to discover differences between diseased and normal tissue to help develop new tests or treatments that might benefit future generations. This research is being carried out here in Cambridge but we sometimes work with other universities or with industry to move our research forwards more quickly than it would If we did everything here.

The consent form you will sign from the hospital allows you to indicate whether you are prepared to provide this tissue. If you would like any further information, please ask the ward to contact your Consultant.

**Who can I contact for more help or information?**

**Oncology Nurses**
- Uro-Oncology Nurse Specialist  
  01223 586748
- Bladder cancer Nurse Practitioner (haematuria, chemotherapy & BCG)  
  01223 274608
- Prostate cancer Nurse Practitioner  
  01223 247608 or 216897 or bleep 154-548
- Surgical Care Practitioner  
  01223 348590 or 256157 or bleep 154-134

**Non-Oncology Nurses**
- Urology Nurse Practitioner (incontinence, urodynamics, catheter patients)  
  01223 274608 or 586748
- Urology Nurse Practitioner (stoma care)  
  01223 349800

**Patient Advice & Liaison Centre (PALS)**
- Telephone  
  +44 (0)1223 216756 or 257257  
  +44 (0)1223 274432 or 274431
- PatientLine  
  *801 (*from patient bedside telephones only*)
- E mail  
  pals@addenbrookes.nhs.uk
- Mail  
  PALS, Box No 53  
  Addenbrooke's Hospital  
  Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 2QQ
Urethrectomy (removal of the male urethra or water pipe)

Chaplaincy and Multi-Faith Community
- Telephone +44 (0)1223 217769
- E mail derek.fraser@addenbrookes.nhs.uk
- Mail The Chaplaincy, Box No 105
  Addenbrooke's Hospital
  Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 2QQ

MINICOM System ("type" system for the hard of hearing)
- Telephone +44 (0)1223 274604

Access Office (travel, parking & security information)
- Telephone +44 (0)1223 586969

What should I do with this form?
Thank you for taking the trouble to read this information sheet. If you wish to sign it and retain a copy for your own records, please do so below.

If you would like a copy of this form to be filed in your hospital records for future reference, please let your Urologist or Specialist Nurse know. If you do, however, decide to proceed with the scheduled procedure, you will be asked to sign a separate consent form which will be filed in your hospital notes and you will, in addition, be provided with a copy of the form if you wish.

I have read this information sheet and I accept the information it provides.

Signature..........................................................Date...........................................

How can I get information in alternative formats?
Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format: 01223 216032 or patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Polish Informacje te można otrzymać w innych językach, w wersji dużym drukiem lub audio. Zamówienia prosimy składać pod numerem: 01223 216032 lub wysyłając e-mail: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Portuguese Se precisar desta informação num outro idioma, em impressão de letras grandes ou formato áudio por favor telefone para o 01223
Addenbrooke’s is smoke-free. You cannot smoke anywhere on the site. Smoking increases the severity of some urological diseases and increases the risk of post-operative complications. For advice on quitting, contact your GP or the NHS smoking helpline free on 0800 169 0 169

Document history
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