Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Flexible Cystoscopy

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Flexible Cystoscopy

Patient Information

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Having a flexible cystoscopy

As with most medical tests, your main anxieties before a flexible cystoscopy will be due to fear of the unknown. This leaflet aims to inform you about the procedure so that you need not have any worries.

What is a flexible cystoscopy?

A flexible cystoscopy is an examination of the inside of the bladder and the urethra (water pipe) using a fine flexible telescope with a light and a tiny camera in the end. This examination will be carried out by a doctor or a urology nurse specialist. Flexible cystoscopy is carried out in The Richmond Urology Unit situated in the Hanover Centre.

In women the urethra is only about 3 to 4 cm long. In men it is much longer and follows an “s” shaped course from the bladder outlet, through the prostate gland and down to the end of the penis. Both men and women have muscular valves called sphincters, which control the flow of urine. A women’s sphincter muscle lies around most of her short urethra while in a man the main sphincter is just below the prostate gland.

Benefits, why do I need a flexible cystoscopy?

Some urinary symptoms are due to problems in the bladder or the urethra. Often the cause will be clear from x-rays or blood and urine tests, but sometimes the only way your doctor can be sure what is going on is to take a look inside your bladder. If you have had blood in your urine, we always must look inside your bladder as well as carrying out CT scans or ultrasound scans.

Alternatives

Unfortunately, there are no alternatives to cystoscopy to inspect the bladder.

How do I prepare for a flexible cystoscopy?

There is no special preparation for a flexible cystoscopy. You should eat and drink as normal and take all your normal medication. You will be asked to empty your bladder immediately before the flexible cystoscopy. You do not need to rest after a flexible cystoscopy and will be able to leave as soon as it is finished.

The procedure

The doctor or nurse carrying out the procedure will clean your genitals with a cleaning solution and then surround the area with a sterile paper sheet. Try not to touch this with your hands. They will then squeeze some lubricating gel into the urethra.

The tip of the flexible cystoscopy is then inserted into the urethra. Men will then be asked to try and pass urine when the flexible cystoscope reaches the sphincter below the prostate gland. This relaxes the sphincter and allows the cystoscope to pass through more easily. Do not worry, no urine will actually come out while the cystoscope is in the urethra. Anything that does leak is water. When the bladder is empty, there are folds in the lining. Sterile water is run into the bladder through the cystoscope to stretch out these folds and give a clearer picture.

As the cystoscope passes through the sphincter there may be momentary stinging.

The flexible cystoscopy should take no more than 5 minutes and the nurse or doctor carrying out the procedure will explain everything to you as it happens. You can expect to be told the results of your examination straight away. Medical photography may be necessary as part of the procedure

What happens after the flexible cystoscopy?

You will probably feel that you need to pass urine immediately after the procedure, because it will be full of water and you will be able to do this straight away.

Risks

Most people have no trouble after a cystoscopy, but there is a small risk of you developing an infection in the urine. Drinking up to 2 litres of fluid after the flexible cystoscopy will also help prevent infection. A little bleeding is also common after a flexible cystoscopy, and you should not worry if you see this. It may also sting slightly the first few times you pass urine after the flexible cystoscopy.

If you develop a high temperature, pain, persistent burning or bleeding, you should contact your GP.

Contact information

Urology Nurse Specialist

Contact Number 01942 264491 at Leigh



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