

Having a flexible cystoscopy and laser ablation (under white or blue light)

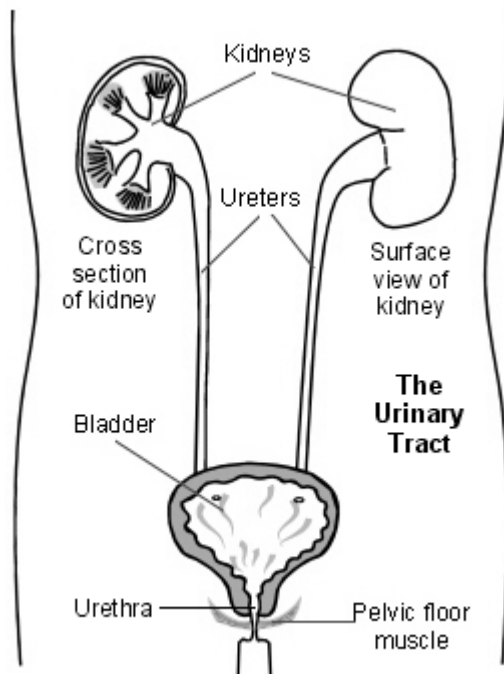
This leaflet aims to answer your questions about having a cystoscopy and laser ablation. It explains the benefits, risks and alternatives, as well as what you can expect when you come to hospital.

If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is a cystoscopy?

A cystoscopy is a procedure that looks at the bladder and other parts of the urinary system. It involves inserting a special fibre-optic telescope, called a flexible cystoscope, into the urethra (the tube that urine passes through from the bladder before leaving the body) and then passing it through to the bladder. This is an outpatient procedure and is carried out in The Urology Centre, 1st Floor Southwark Wing, Guy's Hospital.

The urinary system



Source: diagram copy EMIS and PiP 2006, as distributed on www.patient.co.uk

What is laser ablation?

You will have already had a cystoscopy or another examination which has shown that you may have an abnormal area or tumour in your bladder. Your consultant has recommended laser ablation (removal) in order to diathermy (burn) the areas away. This can be done either under a white light or a blue light cystoscopy (see below).

Before the examination

We will give you an antibiotic injection before the procedure to reduce the likelihood of developing an infection. You will also have a short consultation with your doctor.

During the examination

We will ask you to lie down on your back, and the opening of your urethra and surrounding area will be cleaned. An anaesthetic gel will be put into your urethra. This reduces the discomfort when the cystoscope is inserted.

The nurses will give you protective glasses to wear throughout the procedure to protect your eyes from the laser beam.

When the cystoscope has been gently passed into your bladder, the doctor will insert sterile water into your bladder. This is to help your doctor see the lining of your bladder. It will make your bladder feel full, but don't worry as we will empty it out at the end of the procedure.

The visible, abnormal areas / tumour(s) will be removed from the lining of your bladder wall using the laser fibre contained in the cystoscope. This can cause some bleeding. If there is a lot of bleeding, you may have a fine tube (catheter) inserted into your bladder to allow your bladder to empty.

This process is called white light laser ablation, as no chemicals have been put into the bladder for the procedure, and only a white light has been shone in the bladder to help the doctor to see inside. This procedure can sometimes be performed under blue light as well.

Blue light laser ablation

If you have blue light laser ablation, a chemical called hexyl aminolevulinate (HAL) will be inserted into your bladder an hour before the procedure. This is done by passing a catheter along your urethra and into your bladder. You will need to keep this chemical in your bladder for one hour until the procedure starts. Please do not drink too much before coming to the department (just enough to give a sample of urine) otherwise the chemical will be diluted inside your bladder. Using a special flexible cystoscope with a blue light, your doctor can then check your bladder for any abnormal areas before removing them. During the procedure, if there are any tumour cells, they absorb the chemical and then glow red in the blue light, so they are easier to see.

If you experience any of the following side-effects after the dose is given, please tell your doctor or nurse:

- bladder spasm or pain
- pain or burning on passing urine
- headache
- inability to pass urine
- blood in the urine
- nausea.

How long will the procedure take?

Depending on the size of the abnormal area / tumour(s), the procedure may take between 20-30 minutes. However please allow about two hours for your appointment if you are having the blue light laser ablation (this includes from the time the HAL is put inside your bladder to the time the ablation is completed).

Once the procedure is over, we will ask you to pass urine before leaving the department.

How can I prepare for laser ablation?

As the procedure is done under local anaesthetic, there are no special preparations. You can eat normally during the morning before the procedure. Try not to drink too much in the morning (for the reasons given above), however we will require a specimen of urine when you arrive to ensure there is no infection.

You can take all your morning medication before coming to the hospital. When you are seen in clinic before you have the laser treatment, you should let the doctor or specialist nurse know if you are taking any medicines, particularly antibiotics or anticoagulants (medicine that helps to prevent blood clots from forming), including aspirin, warfarin and clopidogrel (Plavix®). You should continue to take all of your medicines as normal, unless you have been advised otherwise by the doctor that organised your laser treatment. **Please do not stop taking any medicine unless told to do so by your doctors.**

What are the risks?

There are risks associated with most procedures. Your doctor will explain the potential complications of a cystoscopy before asking for your verbal consent to go ahead with the procedure. Please ask if you have any questions or concerns.

A cystoscopy is usually performed with no problems whatsoever. However, possible side-effects are:

- **Discomfort** – you may feel a stinging sensation when you urinate, but this should only last a day or two. Taking your usual pain-relieving medicine as prescribed on the packet may help. If the pain is severe and lasts for more than two days, please contact us or your GP.
- **Bleeding** – you may have a small amount of bleeding from the cystoscope being passed up the urethra. Some patients do not have any bleeding at all, but some find their urine is slightly pink for a few days after this procedure. Drinking plenty of water (two to three litres spaced out over 24 hours) can

help to clear the urine. If your urine remains pink after a few days, please contact us or your GP.

- **Infection** – a urine infection can cause a fever and pain when you pass urine. If you experience these symptoms please contact your GP. The risk of developing an infection can be reduced by drinking plenty of water after the procedure.

Rare occurrences:

- **Temporary insertion of a catheter** – this may be required if you are unable to pass urine normally following the procedure.
- **Delayed bleeding requiring further surgery.**

Are there any alternatives?

Having the procedure done under general anaesthetic; this may not be recommended due to health reasons but if you wish to discuss this please ask your doctor.

When will I get the results?

Your doctor may be able to tell you the result straight after the procedure and arrange the appropriate follow-up.

Will I get a follow up appointment?

If you need a follow-up appointment, we will give this to you before you go home.

What do I need to do after I go home?

You will be able to return to normal activities on the same day as the procedure. You will be able to take a bath or shower and eat and drink normally. You should drink plenty of water (at least two litres per day) to prevent infection and clear any bleeding.

Will I need any dressings?

You may want to wear a pad the day after your cystoscopy to protect your clothing from the small amount of bleeding you may have.

Medication

You may be prescribed antibiotics to lower the risk of infection – it is important that you complete the whole course. You must not drink any alcohol until you have finished your course of antibiotics and your symptoms have completely cleared.

What if there are problems at home following the procedure?

Please contact your GP if you:

- are in extreme pain

- have continuous or excessive bleeding
- pass blood clots
- have a raised temperature - 38°C (100.4F) or above
- have difficulty passing urine.

If you think it is an emergency, please go straight to your nearest accident and emergency (A&E) department.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about having a cystoscopy, please contact the **The Urology Centre** Tel: **020 7188 7188** and ask for extension **8562 or 8563**. For questions about your appointment, call the clinic clerks on **020 7188 2443**, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Outside these hours, please call **Aston Key Ward** on **020 7188 8860** or **Florence Ward** on **020 7188 8818**.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

t: 020 7188 8801 **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

Language Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch using the following contact details.

t: 020 7188 8815 **fax:** 020 7188 5953

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

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