Hydrocele repair

This leaflet explains more about hydrocele repair, including the benefits, risks and any 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 hydrocele repair?
Hydrocele is a Greek work and it literally means ‘collection of water’. A hydrocele is a collection of fluid within the natural covering of the testicle. This layer is like a plastic bag that follows the testis into the scrotum in normal foetal development.

Why do I need a hydrocele repair?
Hydroceles can be present at birth because the ‘plastic bag’ (tunica vaginalis) does not close properly following the descent of the testis. However, usually they appear later in life because of irritation of the tunica. This can be caused by local trauma or infection. In the majority of men we do not know the cause. However, a rare cause of hydroceles is an underlying tumour or cancer of the testis. Your doctor has suggested this procedure for you to check if your hydrocele is affected in this way. Your doctor will examine your testis before and during the operation. Usually you will have an ultrasound examination of your scrotum as part of your assessment.

An ultrasound is a way of seeing different body parts using high frequency sound waves to create images of your internal structures. The sound waves bounce off tissues and organs, which helps to produce an image that is displayed on a screen similar to a television. It is the same type of scan that pregnant women have to look at their baby before it is born.

What are the benefits – why should I have a hydrocele repair?
Normally you only need to have your hydrocele repaired if you experience symptoms such as:
- scrotal heaviness
- fullness of the scrotum.

In some men the hydrocele becomes large, like the size of an orange, and awkward. Your doctor will discuss the problems your hydrocele is causing with you and will advise you whether you should have surgery to correct the problem.

What are the risks?
Although serious complications are rare, every procedure has risks. Your doctor will discuss these with you in more detail:
- Haematoma: This is a collection of blood in your scrotum. It usually settles down by itself as the blood gets absorbed like a bruise, but in some patients (less than 1%) they need a second operation to let the bruise out.
Infection: If you develop a fever, you may have an infection and should seek medical attention from your nearest A&E department. This is rare.

Recurrence: The recurrence rate is less than 5%.

Difficulty passing urine/retention: If you have difficulty passing water before surgery, it is possible that the anaesthetic may cause you this problem. We will check that you are passing water well before you are leave hospital. However, if you have problems at home, you should go to your nearest A&E department for assessment.

An allergic reaction to the medication we give you. Although the risk of this is low, you can reduce it by letting us know if you have had any previous allergic reactions to any medications or food.

Contact your nearest A&E department if you have any difficulty or need. Hospital staff there must call the on-call urology senior house officer at Guy’s for advice on 020 7188 7188 and ask for bleep 1228.

Are there any alternatives?
If you do not feel significantly affected by your hydrocele, you could decide not to have surgery and take painkillers as and when you need them. You could also support your scrotum with tight-fitting underwear or a scrotal support (jock strap). We do not usually advise needle drainage of the fluid from the hydrocele as there is a risk of infection. Your doctor will help to guide you.

How can I prepare for the operation?
You will receive written instructions before your hospital appointment. The instructions will include the following:

- If you are taking blood-thinning medication such as aspirin, clopidogrel or dipyridamole, you should stop taking them for five days before your operation. If you take warfarin, your surgeon will advise you. **If you do not stop taking your blood-thinning medication as instructed, your operation will be cancelled.**
- You will need to arrange for a responsible adult to accompany you home from the hospital.
- You should have nothing to eat or drink six hours before your operation. Unless your doctor or nurse tells you otherwise, please take your morning medication at 6am, with a small sip of water, on the day of your surgery.
- You will have a chance before your operation to ask your surgeon and anaesthetist questions.

Giving my consent (permission)
We want to involve you in decisions about your care and treatment. If you decide to go ahead, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This states that you agree to have the treatment and you understand what it involves.

You should receive the leaflet, *Helping you decide: our consent policy*, which gives you more information. If you do not, please ask a member of staff caring for you for a copy.
What happens during the operation?
Hydrocele repair is usually done as a day surgery, which means you will come to hospital in the morning of your operation and will be able to go home the same day. Our admissions department will give you instructions as to what to do and where to go on the day of your operation.

The procedure is usually performed under a general anaesthetic, which means that you will become temporarily unconscious (asleep), so you do not feel anything during the operation. Before your surgery you will need to fast. Fasting means that you cannot eat or drink anything for six hours before surgery. We will give you clear instructions about when to start fasting. It is important to follow these instructions. If there is food or liquid in your stomach during the anaesthetic, it could come up to the back of your throat and damage your lungs. You will have the opportunity to meet the anaesthetist on the day of your operation. You should receive a copy of the leaflet, **Having an anaesthetic** before your surgery. If you do not receive this, please ask staff for a copy.

The procedure itself takes about 30 minutes and is carried out through an incision (cut) in the scrotum. The fluid is drained from the hydrocele and the sac repaired to prevent the fluid collecting there again. Absorbable stitches are used.

Will I feel any pain?
It is normal to feel some pain after an operation in a sensitive area. We will use some local anaesthetic to numb the area after your operation, but the effect of this will gradually wear off over four hours. We will give you enough pain relief to take home with you, and you should take this as advised. If you feel you require more pain relief or you feel your pain is poorly controlled, please get in touch with either the Urology Department at Guy’s Hospital (see the contact numbers at the end of this leaflet) or your GP.

What happens after the procedure?
You will wake up in the recovery room where our specially-trained recovery nurses will be able to keep a close eye on you while you recover from your anaesthetic. When we are happy with your progress, you will be transferred to the discharge area where you will be able to have a light bite to eat and something to drink. You will be able to leave hospital as long as you are accompanied by a responsible adult and all checks after the operation are complete.

What do I need to do after I go home?
After scrotal surgery you may need to take a week off work. Different surgeons prefer different dressings. You will usually need to wear a scrotal support or jock strap during the day for one week. You will need to keep the wound dry for three days. After this you will be able to shower as normal. During your recovery phase at home you should not need any other special care. However, as a precaution we advise no heavy lifting for two weeks.

Will I have a follow-up appointment?
Hydrocele surgery has good outcomes and low complication rates. We do not usually make a routine appointment to see you again.

If you have a problem, you should contact your GP or the Urology Department at Guy’s Hospital (see contact numbers at the end of this leaflet) and we shall arrange to see you at short notice. Your stitches will dissolve with time and do not need to be removed.
Appointments at King's
We have teamed up with King’s College Hospital in a partnership known as King’s Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at King’s. To make sure everyone you meet always has the most up-to-date information about your health, we may share information about you between the hospitals.

Contact us
If you have any questions or concerns about hydrocele repair, please contact the senior secretary in the Urology Department on 020 7188 6794 and ask to speak to the secretary of the consultant involved in your case. Remember you will see your surgeon again before your operation.

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:
e: 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas’
t: 020 7188 8803 at Guy’s
e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk

Knowledge & Information Centre (KIC)
For more information about health conditions, support groups and local services, or to search the internet and send emails, please visit the KIC on the Ground Floor, North Wing, St Thomas’ Hospital.
t: 020 7188 3416

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 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

Become a member of your local hospitals, and help shape our future
Membership is free and it is completely up to you how much you get involved. To become a member of our Foundation Trust, you need to be 18 years of age or over, live in Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham, Wandsworth or Westminster or have been a patient at either hospital in the last five years. To join:
t: 0848 143 4017    e: members@gstt.nhs.uk    w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk