Insertion of an inflatable penile prosthesis

This leaflet explains more about the insertion of an inflatable penile prosthesis, including the benefits, risks and any alternatives and 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 insertion of an inflatable penile prosthesis?

This procedure involves inserting two inflatable rods into the penis, a pump into the scrotum and a reservoir of water into the abdomen to allow the patient to achieve erections for sexual intercourse.

Why should I have an inflatable prosthesis?

This procedure is used for patients who have erectile dysfunction and who have tried other medical treatments such as tablets, injections, urethral pellets and vacuum devices with an insufficient or unsatisfactory response. This procedure is also carried out for patients with other penile conditions in which the erections have been affected, such as Peyronie’s disease or following a priapism (prolonged painful erection).

What are the risks/side effects?

All surgical procedures carry potential complications, however the majority of patients who have urological procedures do not suffer any problems.

The most common side effect following this type of surgery is temporary swelling and bruising of the penis that may last for several days. Less common side effects include:

- bleeding or infection requiring removal of all or part of the prosthesis (2–3% of cases, higher in diabetic patients)
- nerve injury with temporary or permanent numbness of the glans (head of the penis)
- drooping of the glans, which may need surgical correction
- the glans no longer filling with blood during sexual stimulation leading to a soft glans
- auto-inflation of the prosthesis (3–5% of cases)
- irreversible mechanical failure of the prosthesis (less than 5% of cases).

Are there any alternatives?

This surgical procedure is usually reserved for patients who have tried other treatments but failed to get adequate results. However, you should discuss the possible merits of any treatments you have not have tried with your surgeon.
How can I prepare for insertion of an inflatable penile prosthesis?
There is no special preparation required prior to coming into hospital for this procedure, however you may wish to refer to the booklet, Welcome: Information about your stay, which will be given to you at the time of your pre-assessment appointment. This offers information such as what to bring into hospital with you, and details about going home. The pre-assessment nurses will take a urine specimen to ensure that you do not have a urinary tract infection and they will also take some swabs from your nose, mouth and groin. This is to ensure that you are free from infection prior to your surgery. If you are diabetic, it is important that your diabetes is as well controlled as possible – this will help with your recovery.

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 insertion of an inflatable penile prosthesis?
This procedure is carried out either under general anaesthetic (where you are asleep during the procedure) or a spinal anaesthetic (where you are awake but unable to feel anything from the waist down). The prosthesis will be inserted into the penis through an incision made at the junction of the penis and scrotum. A small pump will be placed into the scrotum and a small balloon of water (called the reservoir) into the abdomen where you will not be able to feel its presence. Occasionally, patients may need an additional small incision in the groin to place the reservoir into the abdomen. This incision is closed with dissolvable sutures (stitches).

What happens after my surgery?
After your surgery you will be taken to a surgical ward where you will stay overnight. Your prosthesis will be left in the inflated position overnight to reduce the risk of bleeding, but it will be deflated the following day before you are discharged home. The deflation of your prosthesis may be uncomfortable but we will give you some painkillers prior to this to help minimise the discomfort. You will also have a urinary catheter and possibly a small wound drain overnight, both of which will be removed before you going home. Your penis and scrotum will be bandaged firmly following the operation, using a technique called a mummy wrap. This helps to reduce post-operative bleeding and swelling. The bandages will be removed prior to discharge.

You will be able to get out of bed and move around the ward as soon as you are awake and feel comfortable enough to do so. You will be able to eat and drink once you return to ward.

The average stay in hospital following this procedure is one night.

When you are discharged, you will be asked not to inflate your prosthesis until you are seen at your outpatient appointment two weeks after your operation.

Will I feel any pain?
You may experience some discomfort following your surgery. Whilst you are in hospital you will be given painkillers as you require them. When you go home please take your painkillers
regularly as prescribed on the packet. Do not exceed the stated dose. This pain and discomfort will settle down after a few days, but if it does not, please contact your doctor.

**What do I need to do after I go home?**

**Dressings:**
Keep your wound clean and dry. You will find it more comfortable to keep your penis elevated against your abdomen (tummy) using supportive underwear or a jock strap. A brief daily shower can help the wound to heal however, you should not soak for long periods or use soap directly on the wound. Dry the wound thoroughly by patting gently with a piece of gauze. Do not rub the area. Alternatively you can use a hairdryer on a **very low heat** to dry the area.

You may develop some bruising of the penis and scrotum. This is normal and wearing supportive underwear is recommended for comfort.

Please do not touch your wound with your hands unless you have washed them thoroughly – this will help to prevent infection.

**Antibiotics:**
You will be given antibiotics to take for five days following your operation. You may also be given a special liquid soap to use when showering for the first two weeks following your operation. This is to help prevent any wound infections.

**Stitches:**
Your stitches are dissolvable and do not need to be removed. It can take roughly between seven and 21 days for them to dissolve.

**Work:**
You will require about two weeks off work, depending on your level of comfort. If you require a sick certificate, please contact your GP. You can self-certify for the first week.

**Aftercare:**
To ensure healing and to minimise complications you must not do any heavy lifting for at least two weeks, and longer if you required a second incision.

Please contact the clinical nurse specialist or your medical team if you notice that the prosthesis has self-inflated.

You must not have sexual intercourse for six weeks following your surgery, unless otherwise instructed by your surgeon.

Please contact your clinical nurse specialist or your medical team using the contact details provided below if you experience any of the following:

- Persistent bleeding from the wound site.
- Pain which is not controlled by the painkillers prescribed.
- A fever of 100°F (38°C) or higher.
- Swelling, redness and/or discharge from the wound.

Out of hours, please contact your GP or nearest accident and emergency (A&E) department.
If you see another doctor or nurse and they examine your genitalia, it is important that you tell them that you have an implant, particularly if they are considering inserting a catheter. If in doubt, please ask them to contact the clinical nurse specialist on the surgical team.

Emergency contact numbers:
Urology centre……………………………………… t: 020 7188 8563
Clinical nurse specialist, Karen Briggs……………t: 07717 346821
On call specialist registrar…………………………t: 020 7188 3026 Bleep no:1228

Will I have a follow-up appointment?
You will be given a follow-up appointment for two weeks following your surgery. At this appointment, we will review your wound, and you will be taught how to inflate and deflate your prosthesis (this is known as 'cycling' the prosthesis). Six weeks after your operation you will be seen again for one final assessment before you start using your device. You will then continue to be followed up on a regular basis and this will be discussed with you at your appointments.

Contact us
If you have any questions or concerns about your procedure, please contact Karen Briggs (andrology nurse specialist) on 07717 346821 (Tuesday to Friday, 7.30am to 5pm). Out of hours, please contact the urology doctor on call. To do this, phone the hospital switchboard on 020 7188 7188 and ask for the bleep desk. Then ask for bleep 1228 and wait for a response. This will connect you directly to the on call doctor.

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 at St Thomas’ t: 020 7188 8803 at Guy’s 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