

Going home after your radical prostatectomy

This information is for men going home from hospital after an operation to remove their prostate gland (radical prostatectomy). It provides information about your recovery for the first few weeks after your operation. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

Discharge checklist

Before you are discharged from the ward:

- Your ward nurse will show you how to look after your catheter.
- Your ward nurse will give you a booklet about catheter care.
- Your ward nurse will teach you or a family member how to give your blood thinning (anticoagulant) injection. This reduces the risk of you developing a blood clot in the leg (deep vein thrombosis or DVT).
- You will be given:
 - continence pads/gauze to take home
 - spare catheter bags to take home (leg bags and nights bags)
 - spare dressings to take home
 - a sharps disposal bin for safe disposal of the injection syringes. This can be taken to any pharmacy once it is full.
- Your ward nurse will give you contact details for your district nurse, if needed.
- You will be given details about when your catheter will be removed (usually around 5–21 days after the operation).
- You will be given an appointment to see your surgeon, which will be around eight weeks after the operation. **You will need a blood test (for prostate-specific antigen or PSA) a week before this appointment.** You will be given a form and further information about how to get this done at Guy's or St Thomas' Hospital.

When can I leave hospital?

Most patients leave hospital the day after their operation. However, you will be seen by the doctors the morning after your procedure and they will make the final decision as to whether you can go home that day. You will be able to travel home by public transport as long as you do not do any heavy lifting.

How long do I need to continue my anticoagulant injections for?

These need to be continued for 28 days in total. You or a family member/friend will be taught how to give the injections before you leave the ward.

What shall I do if I have pain?

You will be given some painkillers to take home with you. You should take these as prescribed. The ward pharmacist or your ward nurse will go through your medications with you before you leave the ward. If the painkillers don't work then contact your nurse specialist.

How do I look after my wound?

You will have some small dressings over your operation wound sites. **These can be removed 48 hours after your operation.** They can be peeled off or soaked off in the bath or shower.

Keep the area clean and dry. Avoid using creams or lotions around the area. If you find that your wounds are oozing through the dressings you can apply a second dressing over the top and leave those dressings in place for an extra day. If you are worried about your wounds, please contact your GP surgery nurse or district nurse.

What if I don't hear from my district nurse?

You should contact the nurse on the number provided by the ward. If you do not have a number, please contact the ward on the numbers listed below:

Florence Ward: 020 7188 8818

Aston Key Ward: 020 7188 8860

Can I bathe or shower with a catheter?

You can shower as normal with a catheter. If you do not have a shower you can take a shallow bath.

When should I start taking medication for erectile dysfunction?

You should not start any medication to restore your erectile function until after your catheter is removed. You may find that you do not need medication. If you are unable to get an erection after your surgery please speak to your GP or nurse specialist about this.

How much exercise should I be doing?

You should gradually build up to your normal level of activity in the weeks following your surgery. It is important to exercise daily and not to remain lying or sitting for long periods of time. You should avoid heavy lifting for four weeks after your operation.

When should I start my pelvic floor exercises?

These are exercises to help you regain control of your continence. You should start these **after** your catheter has been removed.

Why do I have more flatulence (wind) than usual?

This is because the surgeon inflates your tummy with gas during the operation. This will get better after a few days.

There is blood in my urine bag. Is this normal?

It is normal to see some pink or rusty coloured blood in your catheter bag after your operation. If the blood is bright red, thick or continues for longer than 48 hours, please call your nurse specialist for advice.

- Make sure that you drink plenty of water. You should aim to drink two litres of water/fluid a day.
- Try to avoid lifting, or straining to pass bowel movements, as this may make bleeding worse.

Why is there blood and urine leaking around my catheter?

This is because your bladder can become irritated by the catheter tube and go into spasm. This forces some urine and blood out around the tube. This leakage may be enough to wet your clothes.

- Make sure that you drink plenty of water. Avoid tea, coffee and fizzy drinks as they can irritate the bladder further. You should aim to drink two litres of water/fluid a day.
- Make sure that your catheter tube is not twisted or kinked. This will cause a blockage in the flow of urine in the tube and make the leakage worse.
- Do not let the urine bag get too full. If the catheter bag is heavy it may pull on the tube and irritate the bladder.
- You can use a continence pad or gauze around the tip of the penis to soak up the excess fluid.
- Sometimes district nurses will suggest a catheter valve (flip flo) instead of a bag to drain your urine. However, **this is not suitable** for men with catheters after radical prostatectomy.

I am constipated. What should I do?

This can happen because of your decreased mobility before you are discharged from hospital. You should avoid straining to pass bowel motions as this may hurt or cause bleeding. However it may take up to seven days for you to have your bowels open.

- Drink plenty of water.
- Follow the **Guide to eating and drinking following prostatectomy** leaflet.
- Take lactulose syrup (a stool softener, available from the chemist), from day five after the operation, for three days, if necessary.

When can I drive?

You should avoid driving for two to four weeks after surgery. In order to drive safely you need to be confident that you can perform an emergency stop without hesitation. You should bear in mind that pain will prevent you from making an immediate sudden movement.

What should I do if I have a problem?

As highlighted in the pre-operation seminar, if you have any concerns following your operation, please contact your nurse specialist. This includes:

1. severe pain
2. fever (a temperature higher than 38°C)
3. shortness of breath.

You have been given the contact details of your nurse specialist in this pack. You can contact your nurse on any of the numbers given on their cards, however please bear in mind that, as they may be in a clinic at the time of your call, they may not get back to you immediately. For urgent enquiries out of hours, please contact the ward you were on and they will address any concerns you may have.

Florence Ward: 020 7188 8818

Aston Key: 020 7188 8860

You can also call the on call urologist via the switchboard on 020 7188 7188 (bleep 1228).

Will I have a follow-up appointment?

You have been given your next two hospital appointments in this pack. One is for your catheter to be removed and the other is your eight week appointment with the consultant's team.

Contact us

If you have any **questions or concerns** when you get home please contact your specialist nurse on 020 7188 7339, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

For **urgent enquiries within working hours** please contact your specialist nurse on one of the contact numbers she/he has given you.

For **urgent enquiries out of hours** please contact the ward you were on and they will address any concerns you may have.

Florence Ward: 020 7188 8818

Aston Key: 020 7188 8860

You can also call the on call urologist via switch board on 0207 1887188 (bleep 1228).

Guy's and St Thomas' hospitals offer a range of cancer-related information leaflets for patients and carers, available at www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/cancer-leaflets. For information leaflets on other conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets



Dimbleby Cancer Care provides cancer support services for Guy's and St Thomas'. We have a drop-in information area staffed by specialist nurses and offer complementary therapies, psychological support and benefits advice for patients and carers.

Dimbleby Cancer Care is located in the Welcome Village of the Cancer Centre at Guy's. **t:** 020 7188 5918 **e:** DimblebyCancerCare@gstt.nhs.uk

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the clinical nurse specialist or other member of staff caring for you or call our helpline.

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

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

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

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and Accessible Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

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

Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, and to become a member:

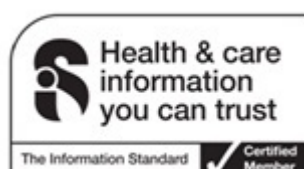
t: 0800 731 0319 **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership

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