

Percutaneous insertion of a nephrostomy tube

Radiology Department
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Other formats

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What is a Nephrostomy and why is it needed?

A nephrostomy is a small tube inserted through the skin into the kidney to allow urine to drain when there is a blockage between the kidneys and your bladder. The tube may stay in for a few days or permanently depending on your medical condition. If you have only one drainage tube inserted you will be able to pass urine in the normal way. If you have two tubes inserted it is unlikely you will pass urine normally as it will be collected in the two drainage bags.

What does it involve?

The nephrostomy tube is inserted through your skin into the affected kidney.

A local anaesthetic is given at the site of entry, which is in your side/back. You will have a small needle inserted into your hand; this enables painkillers and a sedative to be given to you.

You will lie on the x-ray table, generally flat on your stomach. Your skin will be cleaned with antiseptic. The radiologist will use the ultrasound machine and x-ray equipment to decide on the most suitable point for inserting the fine plastic tube (nephrostomy catheter) into the kidney.

When the radiologist is sure that the needle is in a satisfactory position, a guide wire will be placed into the kidney through the needle, which enables the plastic nephrostomy catheter to be positioned correctly. The catheter will then be fixed to the skin surface and attached to a drainage bag.

The procedure will normally take 30 minutes or so but, occasionally, it may take longer.

Once the procedure is finished, you will be transferred to the radiology recovery area for 30 minutes for regular observations and then transferred to the ward and bed rest will be maintained for a few hours until you are comfortable.

What are the alternatives?

No treatment (observation only) or insertion of an internal stent under general anaesthetic.

Special preparations

You will need to have some routine blood tests done.

You will need to wear a theatre gown to allow easy access to the insertion site.

You will be nil-by-mouth prior to the procedure for approximately four hours, and you will be given an antibiotic to prevent infection one hour before the procedure.

The radiologist will explain the reason why you need a nephrostomy tube and will ask you to sign a consent form.

The procedure will be performed in the x-ray department.

What happens after the procedure?

You will be transferred to the Radiology recovery for approximately 30 minutes, the nurses will perform some routine observations of your pulse, temperature and blood pressure. You will then go to the ward for an overnight stay.

You should avoid making sudden movements, once you are mobile, to ensure that the tube does not get pulled or become displaced.

The nurse will monitor your urine output carefully for the next 24 hours.

What are the risks?

As with any procedure, there are some risks and complications that can arise.

The biggest problem is being unable to place the drainage tube in the kidney. If this happens, you will need another method of overcoming the blockage, which may involve surgery.

Occasionally there may be some minor bleeding from the kidney which is visible in the drainage bag or an infection in the kidney. This can be treated with antibiotics.

Aftercare

The drainage tube will remain in place for an appropriate length of time which will be determined by your urologist.

Ensure you wash your hands before and after emptying the drainage bag. The bag needs to be emptied fairly frequently so that it does not become too heavy.

You need to drink 2-3 litres daily.

Keep the skin around the nephrostomy tube clean and, to prevent infection, place a sterile dressing around the site where the tube leaves your skin. Dressings should be changed weekly, especially if they get wet.

The drainage bag should be changed weekly, in most instances the district nurse will perform this task and be responsible for changing the dressing.

You may shower 48 hours after the tube has been inserted but try to keep the tube site itself dry. You can protect the skin with plastic wrap during showering. After 14 days, you may shower without any protection for the tube.

Swimming is not recommended as long as the tube is in place.

Driving after surgery

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are fit to drive following surgery. You do not normally need to notify the DVLA unless you have a medical condition that will last for longer than three months after your surgery and may affect your ability to drive. You should, however, check with your insurance company before returning to driving. Your doctors will be happy to provide you with advice on request.

What else should I look out for?

If you experience a high temperature, back pain, redness or swelling around the tube, leakage of urine from the drainage site, poor (or absent) drainage or if the tube falls out, you should contact your doctor immediately.

In the appendix on the back of this information sheet are some simple steps which your doctor or nurse can go through to try and correct some of these problems. If they are unable to do this, then you will need to be seen by the on-call urology team.

Further information

Any subsequent follow-up or treatment will be arranged by your urologist before your discharge.

If your tube needs to be removed at any stage, this must be performed in hospital and you should contact your urologist.

Radiology nurses contact number between 8am-5.00pm Monday-Friday: **01271 311869**

References

Percutaneous insertion of a Nephrostomy tube patient information leaflet – The British Association of Urological Surgeons/ Addenbrooke's hospital.

Nephrostomy patient information leaflet – Wirrel Hospital NHS Trust

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

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'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

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