Flexible Cystoscopy

A patient guide to an examination of the bladder

Issued by the Urology Department
This leaflet explains why your doctor thinks it would be helpful for you to have a flexible cystoscopy, using a local anaesthetic. It also describes what you can expect when you come for the examination. The purpose of the procedure is to detect any abnormal areas within the bladder or urethra, that may have caused or contributed to your symptoms.

**Benefits**

**Confirmation of:**
- Underlying infection within the bladder lining.
- Tumours within the bladder, which may be benign or malignant.
- Narrowing/stricture of the urethra (water pipe) or bladder neck.

**What does the bladder do?**

The bladder is a hollow, muscular organ, which when full of urine is about the size of a grapefruit. Urine is produced in the kidneys and passes down two tubes called ureters to be stored in the bladder. When you want to pass urine the muscles in the bladder wall squeeze the urine out through a tube called the urethra. In women the urethra is about an inch long but in men it is much longer as it passes through the prostate gland and penis.

**Why do I need a cystoscopy?**

You may have noticed:
- blood in your urine or, if you have given a urine sample, there may have been blood in it.
- pain when passing urine.
- the need to pass urine more frequently or urgently.

Or you may have had previous growths in your bladder.

Some urinary symptoms are due to problems in the bladder or urethra. Sometimes the cause of your problem may be clear from x-rays or blood and urine tests. Often the only way your doctor
can be sure of what is going on is to look inside your bladder with a flexible cystoscope.

**What is a flexible cystoscopy?**

When you have a cystoscopy, a flexible tube containing a miniature telescope is passed through your urethra into the bladder. The doctor can see the inside of the bladder and urethra and if necessary take samples (biopsies) from the lining.

![Diagram of female and male anatomy with flexible cystoscope](image)

How long will the examination take and will it be painful?
The examination takes about 10 minutes but please allow up to an hour for your appointment. You may experience some slight discomfort but it should not be painful. The cystoscope is a flexible tube, which adjusts itself to fit the curve in the male urethra (the female urethra being shorter and straight). This allows it to pass through with minimal discomfort and avoids the need for a general anaesthetic.

What will happen before the examination?
Before you come to the hospital:

- you can eat and drink as normal before a cystoscopy
- remember to take any tablets or medication at the usual time.

After you have arrived:

- The doctor or nurse will talk to you and ask you to sign a consent form, giving your permission for the examination to take place, showing you understand what is to be done and confirming you wish to proceed. You may have already been asked to complete this at your first assessment appointment. If you have any questions, please ask before signing the form.

- A nurse will give you a gown to put on.

- Just before the start of your cystoscopy you will be asked to go to the toilet and give a fresh specimen of urine.

What happens during the cystoscopy?
You will lie in a comfortable position on the examination couch. The doctor or nurse will explain everything to you while they are doing the procedure:
• The area around the opening to your urethra will be cleaned with a warm mild antiseptic solution.
• You will be covered with sterile towels.
• Some local anaesthetic jelly will be squeezed into your urethra. This may sting a little but it will soon wear off.
• Then the doctor or nurse will gently put the tip of the cystoscope into your urethra and push it onwards into your bladder.

When the bladder is empty there are folds in the lining. Sterile water is put into the bladder through the cystoscope to stretch the lining. This makes it easier to see. You may feel that you want to go to the toilet and this can cause some discomfort. If this becomes too painful tell the doctor or nurse and they will stop. The doctor or nurse may suggest that you have the examination repeated under a general anaesthetic. This makes it easier to inspect the lining of your bladder.

**What else may be done?**

If necessary the doctor can take specimens (biopsies) from the bladder lining, through the cystoscope.

**What are the risks and side effects from having a cystoscopy?**

Most patients have no trouble at all after the examination. You may experience a mild burning or stinging sensation on passing urine. If biopsies have been taken you may pass some blood. Drinking extra fluids for a day or two will help. Occasionally it is possible to get a urine infection. If you have a temperature, pain or persistent burning or bleeding you should see your own doctor.

**Alternatives**

The procedure may be carried out under general anaesthetic, however, this has to be agreed by the Consultant Urologists due to risk factors involved when undergoing a general anaesthetic.
When can I go home?
You will be able to leave the department as soon as you are dressed and have been to the toilet. You will be able to drive yourself home if necessary.

When will I get the results?
The doctor or nurse will tell you what was seen at the end of the examination. If you have biopsies or x-rays taken the results are usually available after four weeks.

How can other questions be answered?
If you are concerned about any aspect of your procedure, please contact the nurse specialists at your relevant hospital, who will advise you further.

Useful contact numbers
North Tyneside General Hospital
Nurse Specialists Urology
0191 293 4142

Wansbeck General Hospital
Nurse Specialists Urology
01670 529154

Hexham General Hospital
Nurse Specialists Urology
01434 655080
Alternative Formats
If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on 03 44 811 8118

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices
www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)
www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)
Freephone: 0800 032 0202
Text: 01670 511098
Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
General Enquiries 03 44 811 8111
www.northumbria.nhs.uk

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