



Oxford University Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Flexible cystoscopy

**Information for  
patients attending the  
Urology Department**



## **Why have I been given this leaflet?**

You have been given this leaflet because you are due to have a flexible cystoscopy. This will be carried out under local anaesthetic (so you will remain awake during the procedure) at the Wytham Urology Outpatient Department at the Churchill Hospital OR at The Endoscopy Unit at The Horton General Hospital.

Please read this leaflet before your appointment. The nurse practitioner or doctor will go through the information with you at your appointment and answer any questions you may still have.

## **What is a flexible cystoscopy?**

A flexible cystoscope is a thin, flexible tube containing a fibre-optic telescope which is passed into the bladder via the tube through which urine passes (urethra). It is about as thick as a pencil.

## **Why do I need a flexible cystoscopy?**

Flexible cystoscopy can help to find out what is causing symptoms you may be having such as:

- Seeing blood in your urine
- Traces of blood that you can not see but that show on a urine 'dipstick' test
- Recurrent urine infections
- Difficulty or pain passing urine
- Incontinence

You may have been referred on the urgent 2 week wait suspected cancer pathway.

You may be having a 'check' cystoscopy to check on the health of your bladder at regular intervals if you have already had treatment for bladder cancer.

## **What may you find when you do a flexible cystoscopy?**

- Bladder stones.
- Bladder cancer.
- Narrowing of the tube through which urine passes (urethra) known as strictures.
- A long term infection.

## **Preparing for your flexible cystoscopy**

You can eat and drink normally and take all your regular medication. You can drive yourself to and from the hospital as this procedure is done under local anaesthetic.

### **Please bring:**

- a fresh urine specimen (taken within the last 2 hours) in a clean container. If you have not been able to do this you will be asked to provide a specimen on arrival in the department. This is to check that you do not have a urine infection. If you do, this may mean we cannot go ahead with the flexible cystoscopy until it has been treated.
- a list of your current medication
- a dressing gown & slippers

## **What should I expect when I arrive?**

Your appointment letter will tell you at which hospital you are having your procedure. Please come to the reception at the Wytham Urology Outpatient Department (Churchill Hospital) or Endoscopy Unit (Horton General Hospital).

A nurse will go through your medications with you and ask you some questions. You will be asked to change into a hospital gown and remove your lower clothes.

You should expect to be in the department for up to one hour so that we can prepare you for the procedure. The flexible cystoscopy itself takes only a few minutes.

We need to ask for your consent – or permission – before we carry out the cystoscopy. The nurse practitioner/doctor will explain the risks and benefits before they ask for your consent. Remember that it is your choice whether you give your consent or not. If you have any doubts or would like more information before you make a decision, please ask us for more information. We will do everything we can to help you. You will then be asked to sign a consent form.

## **What should I expect during the flexible cystoscopy?**

You will be asked to lie on your back on a couch. Female patients will be asked to adopt a similar position to that when having a smear test. As with many medical procedures a flexible cystoscopy involves some slight discomfort and you may feel embarrassed and that it is a little undignified. The staff in the clinic room will aim to minimise your discomfort and maintain your dignity at all times.

The nurse practitioner/doctor will clean the genital area with some sterile water and insert some lubricating gel into the urethra. This helps the cystoscope pass into the bladder. It also contains some antiseptic (to help prevent infection) and local anaesthetic (to make the area numb). This can sting for a few seconds. The cystoscope is then gently inserted into the urethra and up into the bladder. This can be uncomfortable but only takes a few seconds to be inserted.

The bladder is then partly filled with sterile water which allows the nurse practitioner/doctor to inspect the bladder lining. Once all parts of the bladder have been inspected – which takes less than 5 minutes – the cystoscope will be withdrawn.

For women the nurse practitioner/doctor may then do an internal examination of the vagina by inserting two gloved fingers to feel inside the pelvis for any abnormality that may be causing your symptoms.

For men the nurse practitioner/doctor will do a digital rectal examination (DRE) inserting a gloved finger into the 'back passage' to feel the prostate, to check its size and any abnormalities.

## What should I expect after the flexible cystoscopy?

You can get up slowly and get dressed. We recommend you pass urine before you leave the department as your bladder will be full from the procedure.

## Are there any side effects?

**Stinging/'burning' on passing urine** – almost all people experience some stinging or a burning sensation when they pass urine after the procedure. This should settle within 2 to 3 days.

**Blood in your urine** – almost all people will see a pink tinge or some blood clots in their urine which should settle within a couple of days.

Drinking more water/non-alcoholic fluid than usual will help with the stinging sensation and to clear any blood.

**Infection in your urine requiring antibiotics** – up to 1 in 50 people will get a urine infection that requires antibiotics. See below for when to seek help.

## When should I seek help?

You should contact your GP immediately if:

- the stinging/burning sensation and/or blood in the urine continue for more than 3 days.
- you develop symptoms of a urine infection, which include:
  - Cloudy and offensive smelling urine.
  - Pain when passing urine (after the first 2 days).
  - High temperature (above 37.5°C).
- you are unable to pass urine.

## **Further information**

**British Association of Urological Surgeons**

**[www.baus.org.uk/patients](http://www.baus.org.uk/patients)**

## **How to contact us**

If you are unable to come for your appointment or have a query about your appointment time please contact the waiting list office:

Tel: **01865 234 444**

(8.00am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday)

## Further Information

Please speak to the department where you are being seen if you would like an interpreter. You will find their contact details on your appointment letter. Please also ask them if you would like this information leaflet in another format, such as:

- easy read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronically
- in another language.

We have tried to make this information meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They will be happy to help.

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