

# Varicocele embolisation

## Patient information factsheet

### What is a varicocele embolisation?

- A varicocele embolisation is a procedure used to treat enlarged veins around the testicle, called varicoceles.
- Varicoceles happen when veins do not drain blood properly, which makes them swell.
- During the procedure, the blood flow to the abnormal vein is blocked. This lowers the pressure and helps relieve symptoms.
- This treatment is done by an interventional Radiologist using X-rays to guide them. It does not need surgery.

### Why do I need a varicocele embolisation?

- Your Doctor will have explained why this procedure has been recommended to you.
- Varicoceles can cause:
  - Discomfort or aching in the scrotum (The scrotum is the pouch of skin and muscle that holds and protects the testicles)
  - Pain that may worsen when standing, exercising, or cycling
  - Fertility problems in some men.
- Treating a varicocele can help relieve symptoms and may sometimes improve sperm count.
- It can be treated with surgery or simple radiology procedures.
- Varicocele embolisation is done as a day procedure. A tiny cut (about 3 to 4 mm) is made, usually in the groin.

### Are there any risks?

#### Radiation exposure

- This procedure uses X-rays.
- The amount of radiation used is very small.

- Your doctor has decided that the benefits of the procedure are greater than the small risks from radiation.
- We take every step to keep radiation exposure as low as possible.

### Allergic reaction

- A small number of patients may have an allergic reaction to the X-ray contrast dye (the special liquid used in medical scans to help doctors see inside the body more clearly). This is rare and can range from mild to severe.
- Please tell a member of staff immediately if you develop:
  - An itchy rash
  - Difficulty breathing.
- You will be asked about any allergies before the procedure to reduce this risk.

### Procedure-related risks

- Varicocele embolisation is very safe, but possible risks include:
  - Mild bruising (haematoma) at the needle site, which usually settles within 1 or 2 weeks.
  - Mild discomfort in the groin, loin (the loin is the lower part of your back, just above your hips and below your ribs), or scrotum for a few days.
- Rare complications include:
  - Movement of a coil (metal ringlets) used to block the vein into the lungs (this is very uncommon and usually causes only mild symptoms).
  - Sometimes, the vein cannot be blocked successfully. If this happens, surgery may be offered instead.
  - There is a small chance the varicocele may return. This can happen with all treatments and may require repeat treatment or surgery.

### Before your procedure

- Do not eat anything for four hours before your appointment.
- You may drink clear fluids, such as water.
- Continue taking your usual medications unless told otherwise by a healthcare professional.

### When should I arrive?

- Please arrive at the radiology department at the time stated in your appointment letter or text message.

## Can someone come with me?

- You may bring a friend or relative with you.
- They must wait in the waiting area during your procedure.

## On the day of the procedure

- You will be shown to a cubicle and asked to change into a hospital gown.
- You may need to remove jewellery, glasses, or metal items.
- A Nurse or Radiographer will check your details and ask about your medical history.
- The Radiologist will explain the procedure and ask you to sign a consent form.
- You may ask questions at any time and can change your mind about having the procedure.

## During the procedure

- You will lie flat on an X-ray table.
- The procedure is done in a clean, sterile environment.
- The Radiologist will numb the skin (usually in the groin, sometimes the neck) with local anaesthetic.
- A thin tube (catheter) is then guided into the vein using X-ray imaging.
- Small metal coils are placed into the abnormal vein to block blood flow.
- Contrast dye is used to confirm the vein is fully blocked.
- Once complete, the catheter is removed and pressure applied to prevent bleeding.

## How long will it take?

- Every patient is different, so it can be hard to know how long the procedure will be.
- Usually, the procedure takes about 1 hour, but it can take longer.

## After the procedure

- Nurses will check your pulse, blood pressure, and the area where the treatment was done.
- You will rest in bed for a few hours.

- You can usually go home the same day.
- Take it easy for the rest of the day.
- You can usually go back to normal activities the next day unless your health professional tells you not to.

### Can I drive home?

- No. You must have a responsible adult to take you home.
- Do not drive on the day of the procedure.

### Returning to work and exercise

- Rest for the remainder of the day.
- Avoid heavy lifting and gym activity for 1 to 2 weeks.
- You can usually return to work after 48 hours.

### When should I seek medical help?

Contact your GP or attend Accident and Emergency (A&E) if you experience:

- A lot of bleeding from the place where the needle or tube was inserted.
- Increasing pain
- High temperature or fever
- Diarrhoea or signs of infection.

### Contact our service

For questions about your appointment at the Imaging Department please contact us on 020 7288 5888 (Monday to Friday from 9am to 3pm).

For any other questions, please contact the Urology Patient Pathway Co-ordinator on 020 7288 5221 (Monday to Friday from 9am to 3pm).

### Contact our Trust

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern, please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on **020 7288 5551** or [whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net).

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet, please email [whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net). We will try our best to meet your needs.

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