

The peritoneal dialysis catheter

Department of Renal Medicine Patient Information Leaflet

Introduction

The information contained in this booklet is for:

- Patients who have renal failure and need a peritoneal catheter to carry out their dialysis.
- Patients who are having haemodialysis and are transferring to the continuous peritoneal dialysis program (CAPD).

This booklet contains information on what a peritoneal catheter is, how one is fitted, how to look after it once it is in place and what to do if you have any problems.

Please note that the information in this booklet is only a guide. If you need any more information or have any queries, please speak to the Renal Unit staff.

What is dialysis?

People who have renal failure have lost the normal functions of one or both of their kidneys. Usually the kidneys filter blood and remove waste produced by the activities of the body. When the kidneys no longer function correctly, the waste produced by the body cannot be removed by the affected kidneys. The build-up of these toxins can be fatal, if you are not treated.

One way of getting rid of the waste is to use the inside lining of your belly as a natural filter. This lining is called the peritoneum. Waste is taken out by using a cleansing fluid of concentrated glucose liquid. When the fluid is drained out of your belly (abdomen), it takes the waste products with it.

In order to get the glucose liquid next to the peritoneum, and to drain it out, a tube is inserted into the abdomen. The medical name of this is a peritoneal dialysis catheter.

What is a peritoneal dialysis catheter?

It is a specially designed length of thin silicon rubber. The material has been produced specially for use inside the human body.

There will be a small, fluffy piece of material called a Dacron cuff on the catheter between where it is inserted and where it comes out. You may feel it or see this under your skin. The cuff serves two purposes:

- to help hold the catheter in place as your skin heals around it.
- to help prevent infections, by stopping bacteria from entering the catheter.

The catheter can stay in place as long as you need it. It will not need to be changed for another one unless you have any problems with it.

What are the benefits?

The benefits of peritoneal dialysis are:

- The treatment does not take long, only about 30 minutes
- You can still be independent and carry on working if you want to

What are the alternatives?

The alternatives are haemodialysis or a kidney transplant.

What happens before the catheter is inserted?

We will give you a date to come into hospital, either the day before or the day of the operation. Usually, we will give you some laxatives to take for two days before the operation. This is because your bowels have to be empty to have the procedure.

We will give you an antiseptic wash gel to use in the shower on the morning of your operation.

How is the catheter inserted?

The catheter is inserted by one of our renal consultants in one of our operating theatres. The operation can be carried out using one of the following:

- an epidural – an injection in your back that numbs your nerves so you do not feel pain
- a general anaesthetic where you will be asleep

This will depend on your general health at the time.

The surgeon will make a small cut in your abdomen (belly), just under your belly button. The surgeon then inserts the catheter into the space by the peritoneum. The other end of the catheter is pushed out through the skin.

The catheter is stitched in for security and a clear dressing is used to keep the catheter in place.

How long does it take?

The procedure takes about an hour.

What happens after the catheter has been put in?

It is normal to have some discomfort for the first few days after the catheter has been put in. We recommend that you take painkillers such as paracetamol, if you can take it (always read the label; do not exceed the recommended dose). We may also prescribe another painkiller for you, if you need it.

You will need to keep taking laxatives after the operation, as if you get constipation, it may make your pain worse.

How do I care for the catheter?

Once the catheter has been put in, you will need to follow this advice for the first two weeks:

- Try to keep the site where the catheter goes in dry. Do not have a bath or shower until the staff in the CAPD unit tell you that you can.
- Check the dressing is in place at least daily but do not remove it.
- Do not lift heavy objects, including shopping bags.
- Do not drive until you have checked with your insurance company that you are covered to do so. Do not drive if you have any discomfort that may distract you. You should be able to do an emergency stop.
- Ask for advice any time you need to. Use the CAPD Unit helpline for any queries.

What happens next?

We will give you appointments to visit the CAPD Unit twice a week for the first two weeks so that we can check everything is fine.

After two weeks, the skin will have grown over the Dacron cuff, and the small hole made to put the catheter in will have healed. At this point, we will take the stitches out and you will be able to start having dialysis.

To do this, you will need to come to the CAPD Unit every day for at least one week so that we can train you in how to carry out dialysis at home.

This may seem like a long time but we need to teach you how to care for your catheter, and to identify and deal with any problems that may arise.

What are the risks from this type of catheter?

As with any medical procedure, there is always the risk of complications. For this type of catheter, the risks are:

- Bleeding from the site where the catheter comes out. This normally only happens when the catheter is first fitted.
- Infection of the site or the area around where the catheter comes out.
- Movement of the tip of the catheter so that drainage of the fluid becomes difficult.
- Blockage of the catheter.
- The catheter may fall out. This is extremely rare.

If any of these happen to you, try not to worry too much but talk to the CAPD staff for advice. These problems are can usually be sorted out easily.

Take good care of your catheter. It will be your lifeline.

Other advice

Do not allow anyone to use your peritoneal dialysis catheter for anything other than dialysis.

We will give you with a card telling people that you have a peritoneal catheter fitted and what it is for. Please carry this card with you at all times.

We will also give you a little plastic clip in case you cut or catch your catheter and it starts leaking. You will need to carry this with you at all times as well.

Please do not use scissors anywhere near your catheter.

If you are at all worried, please contact us.

Worries and concerns

We understand that this will be a very stressful time for you. We are here to listen to you and your family. We will answer your questions, or we can put you in contact with patients who have had the same treatment.

We are also able to put you in contact with our two dedicated clinical psychologists. If you feel that you would like to contact them directly, you can ring them on 01384 366249.

Can I find out more?

You can find out more from the following weblinks:

Kidney Research UK

<https://www.kidneyresearchuk.org/health-information/continuous-ambulatory-peritoneal-dialysis>

NHS Choices

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Dialysis/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Renal Unit contact information

The Continuous Ambulatory Peritoneal Dialysis (CAPD) Unit on 01384 244384

7.30am to 9pm, Monday to Friday

9am to 7pm, Saturday and Sunday

Out of these hours, ring the hospital switchboard number and tell them you are a renal patient. Ask to speak to the CAPD nurse on call.

Remember: the CAPD team is always willing to give help and advice. Please contact us, however small your query.

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dudleygroup.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/renal/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email patient.information@dgh.nhs.uk

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

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