

Cystoscopy

Patient Information

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What is cystoscopy?

A cystoscopy is a procedure where by a flexible miniature telescope is passed down the water-pipe (urethra), to allow examination of the inside of the bladder. Flexible cystoscopy is a simple quick procedure with minimal discomfort. It is usually performed with a local anaesthetic gel which is inserted into the urethra which mainly acts as a lubricant.

Why 'flexible' cystoscopy?

The lenses at each end of a flexible cystoscope are connected by a bundle of tiny glass fibres, which allows the telescope to bend freely. The flexible cystoscope adjusts itself to fit the male and female urethra allowing it to pass through easily. Flexible Cystoscopy is usually performed as an outpatient procedure in the endoscopy unit with the patient lying on a trolley.

Why do I need a cystoscopy?

Some urinary symptoms are due to problems in the bladder, prostate or the urethra. Sometimes the cause will be clear from x-rays or other tests, but often the only way your doctor can be sure about what is going on is to take a look inside the lower urinary tract with a cystoscope.

How to prepare for the procedure

No special preparations are required for the procedure. This means that on the day of the investigation you can eat and drink as normal unless your doctor has ordered additional scans. If this is the case, please check with your doctor before hand if any preparation is required for the other scan.

The Procedure

The procedure will take place in the endoscopy unit. On arrival in the unit, you will complete your registration and a nurse / doctor assessment and you will be asked to change into a hospital gown. You will also be asked to provide a urine sample.

The doctor will clean the genitals with a mild disinfectant and then surround the area with a paper sheet. Try not to touch it with your hands. Local anaesthetic jelly is squirted gently into the urethra, which acts as a lubricant and antiseptic. As the jelly is gently squeezed into the urethra, you will briefly experience a warm or slight stinging sensation. When this settles, the doctor then inserts the tip of the cystoscope into your urethra. It may help the scope to pass more easily if you can try to pass urine just as the cystoscope is about to enter the bladder. This allows the sphincter muscle to relax naturally. Don't worry, no urine will actually come out while the cystoscope is in the urethra. There may be momentary discomfort as the sphincter opens and the scope passes through.

The flexible cystoscope can be directed around the inside of the bladder to allow its interior surface to be examined closely. Once in the bladder there is usually little or no discomfort. To allow examination of the entire bladder it is usually necessary to fill the bladder with sterile fluid. You may be able to look at the inside of your bladder on a monitor nearby. It is natural at the end of the examination to feel as if you need to pass water again.

It is usual for a nurse to stay with you throughout the examination which is very quick. You may experience some discomfort but it will not last long.

Following your procedure, you should be able to leave the endoscopy unit without additional assistance and there is no need to rest afterwards.

Can other procedures be performed at the same time?

Because you are awake, only minor procedures can be done during a flexible cystoscopy. Often the flexible cystoscope will only be used to look; if something more needs to be done, you will be asked to come back. However, it is possible to take small biopsies from the lining of the bladder and remove stents (fine catheters) that have been previously inserted under General Anaesthetic without difficulty. Occasionally it is difficult to enter the bladder, in which case the urethra can be dilated prior to insertion of the scope. In addition, small areas of the bladder can be cauterised or treated with laser, following discussion with your doctor.

What are the after-effects of flexible cystoscopy?

Most patients have no trouble after cystoscopy. You may experience a little bleeding or mild burning when passing water, however both should resolve quickly. Drinking extra fluids may help flush the system out.

Cystoscopy can occasionally cause or exacerbate a urinary infection. If you develop a temperature, pain, persistent burning or bleeding, contact your doctor.

Questions or concerns

Further questions can be answered on the day of your cystoscopy and you can expect the results of your examination straight away. A letter will also be sent to your GP.

If you have any additional questions or concerns following your procedure, please contact your consultant directly.

If you are unable to contact your consultant, please contact
Endoscopy Unit, Bon Secours Hospital Dublin
t: **01 806 5492** from 7:30am – 7:30pm

Out of hours, please call the main reception on **01 806 5300** for the out of hours nurse in charge.

Doc No. PI 49
Issue Date: 14/04/21
Issue No. 001



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