

PATIENT INFORMATION

Hydrocoele in children

What is a hydrocoele?

A hydrocoele is a fluid filled sac which lies alongside the testis within the scrotum.

During pregnancy, boy's testicles are formed inside the babies' abdomen and before birth the testicles descend down into the scrotum. A hydrocoele develops when the passage through which the testicles descend into the scrotum fails to close completely. Fluid from inside the abdomen can then flow through the passage into the scrotum causing the scrotum to appear swollen.

A hydrocoele can occur on only one side ('unilateral') or on both sides ('bilateral').

What are the signs of a hydrocoele?

A hydrocoele makes the testicle/scrotum look swollen and feel like a balloon filled with water. The testicle is not painful. The amount of swelling observed can change over the course of the days/on different days.

Your doctor will confirm the diagnosis of a hydrocoele by feeling your son's scrotum. Scans are not usually required as long as the underlying testis can be felt and examined easily.

How is a hydrocoele prevented?

There is no way of preventing a hydrocoele. It is not due to anything a mother did during pregnancy.

How is a hydrocoele treated?

In many cases, during the first years of life, the passage may close spontaneously and so the hydrocoele resolves without any treatment being required. If your son's hydrocoele does not resolve on its own, an operation will be offered.

The operation to correct the hydrocoele is called 'Ligation of the Patent Processus Vaginalis (PPV Ligation)' and is carried out under general anaesthetic. The surgeon will make a small cut in the groin area, locate and close the passage. The wound is stitched on the inside of the skin so you will not be able to see any of the stitches. All stitches are dissolvable. Sometimes paper tapes (called 'steri strips') are also applied.

Local anaesthetic will be used at the end of the operation so that when your son wakes up he will usually experience little discomfort.

If your son has a hydrocoele on both sides, both can be operated on at the same time.

- **Purchasing suitable painkillers:** It is important that you purchase some children's pain killers such as Paracetamol (eg Calpol) and Ibuprofen before admission to hospital so that you have these available at home after discharge.
- **If your child becomes unwell:** If your child has a cold, cough or illness such as chicken pox) the operation will need to be postponed to avoid complications. Please telephone us to discuss, prior to coming to hospital.
- **Starvation times:** Your child will not be able to eat and drink before the operation. Specific advice about this will be given on the day before your child's surgery when you telephone the ward to confirm bed availability (for children attending one of our children's wards) or during the preoperative assessment.

Admission to hospital

Depending on your child's age and any underlying conditions (e.g. epilepsy) you will be asked to bring your child to either the day surgery unit or one of the children's wards on the morning of the operation. You will be seen by nursing staff, your doctors and an anaesthetist (who puts your child to sleep for the operation). You will be able to be present while your child goes to sleep and may also be present in the recovery area when your child wakes up.

After the operation

- Once your son is fully awake he will be able to have a drink and then something to eat.
- Painkillers (called 'analgesia') will be given as needed (usually paracetamol and/or ibuprofen).
- Most boys who have had a hydrocoele repair will be able to go home on the same day as their operation.
- If your child does need to stay overnight in hospital we will provide a bed for a parent to also stay if you wish to do so.
- After the operation you may not see an immediate change in appearance because of the swelling that is evident. The swelling may take a few weeks to completely resolve.

What are the complications of a hydrocoele repair (PPV Ligation)?

Complications from this operation are rare. Rare complications include:

- infection
- recurrence of the Hydrocoele
- there is a slight risk that the vas tubing (the tube that allows the passage of sperm) can be damaged at the
- time of surgery, as it lies very close to the wall of the fluid sac of the hydrocele
- on occasion the testicle can appear to sit higher after surgery than before the operation; this is because the testicle is pulled upwards a little at the time the sac is tied off.

Very occasionally, although the surgeon could only detect a hydrocoele on one side, a hydrocoele later becomes evident on the opposite side and so your son would then need to undergo a hydrocoele repair on that side too.

Discharge advice

- Your child's wound should be kept clean and dry; they should not be bathed for five days after the operation (wiping over the area with warm water is fine).
- We advise that your child wears loose fitting clothes for a few days after their operation. Denim trousers for example can rub on the wound and make it sore.
- Boys may find some physical activities (such as PE at school, bicycle riding and swimming) uncomfortable and should therefore refrain from these for one to two weeks.
- Paracetamol ('Calpol') and/or ibuprofen ('Brufen Paediatric' or 'Junifen') should be given to prevent pain. Do follow the instructions on the bottle.
- Occasionally a wound can become infected. If your child's wound becomes red or there is increased tenderness, contact your GP.

Follow up arrangements

Your son will be reviewed in the outpatient clinic. This may be between two weeks and three months after the operation depending on the reason for the procedure being undertaken. The doctors/nurses will let you know when your son is due to return for his check up and the actual appointment will be sent to you in the post. At the outpatient

appointment your son may be asked (if toilet trained) to undertake a urine test so it is helpful if he can arrive at the appointment with a 'full bladder'.

Who else can I contact for more specific help or information about this leaflet?

Your consultant via their secretary on 01284 712549

You will also find our nurse specialist colleagues at the West Suffolk happy to answer queries:

Urology Nurse Practitioner 01284 712806
or 01284 713229

Other contacts

Admissions Telephone 01284 712980

Appointments Telephone 01284 713713

What should I do with this form?

Thank you for taking the trouble to read this information sheet. If you wish to sign it and retain a copy for your own records, please do so below.

If you would like a copy of this form to be filed in your hospital records for future reference, please let us know.

I have read this information sheet and I accept the information it provides.

Signature.....

Date.....