


Information about having a
Percutaneous Nephrostomy



What is a Percutaneous Nephrostomy?

Percutaneous means through the skin and a nephrostomy is a tube which is put into the kidney. The urine from a normal kidney drains through a narrow tube, the ureter, into the bladder. When a stone or a blood clot blocks that tube, the kidney can be damaged.

It may be possible to drain the urine by inserting a fine plastic tube called a catheter through the skin and into the kidney under local anaesthetic. The urine drains from the kidney in a collecting bag outside the body.

Who will do it?

A specially trained doctor called a Radiologist.

Where will it be done?

Usually in a screening room in the x-ray department. It may also be done in an operating theatre.

When can I discuss the procedure?

You can discuss this with your referring doctor in the ward, and also the Radiologist before the procedure.

Consent

We will ask you to sign a consent form before the procedure. Please make sure that you ask any questions you may have. When signing the form you should know what we plan to do, alternative treatments, and any risks or complication of the procedure.

What preparation is required before the procedure?

You cannot eat for 6 hours before the procedure but you may drink small amounts of clear fluid up to 2 hours before the procedure. We may give you antibiotics.

You will need to undress and wear a hospital gown.

What happens during the procedure?

This is a sterile procedure however the technique used may vary but generally you will lie on your stomach on the x-ray table.

We will give you a sedative or painkiller via a needle in your arm. We will monitor your vital signs (blood pressure, pulse, oxygen intake). You may need oxygen.

The radiologist will use the x-ray or ultrasound equipment to guide the fine plastic tube (catheter). Usually this will be in your back just below your ribs. We will clean your skin with antiseptic solution and inject a local anaesthetic.

You may experience some slight discomfort for a short period of time but the painkillers can help.

How long will it take?

This can vary for a number of reasons however you can expect to be in the x-ray department for about one hour.

What happens afterwards?

You will return to your ward and remain on bed rest for a few hours. The nursing staff will monitor you and carry out routine observations (blood pressure, pulse etc).

The drainage catheter stays in place and will be attached to a collection bag. You should be able to carry on as normal however it is important to remain aware that the drainage system is still attached so avoid sudden movements.

The doctor looking after you will decide how long the catheter has to remain in place. We remove the catheter in the x-ray department and this is usually pain free.

Are there any risks?

Percutaneous nephrostomy is a safe procedure but as with any medical treatment some risks and complications can arise.

In almost all cases some blood will appear in the urine. This is not dangerous and usually stops within a few hours.

Severe bleeding (this is uncommon) may need an operation.

If the radiologist is unable to place the drainage tube satisfactorily in the kidney (this is uncommon) we will arrange another method of overcoming the blockage.

Any infection can generally be treated with antibiotics.

Major complications including death occur in less than 0.5% of percutaneous nephrostomies. This is less than 1 in 100 patients.

If you have any questions please telephone the number on your appointment card or letter.