

Information Leaflet for Parents/Carers

# Hydrocele Repair

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## What is a Hydrocele?

A hydrocele is a swelling in the scrotum (testicular bag) caused by a collection of fluid around the testicle. A hydrocele can occur to only one testicle or both testicles. The size of swelling observed can change over the course of the day/on different days. The hydrocele does not cause pain or affect the testicle.

## Why does it happen?

During pregnancy, testicles develop inside a male baby's tummy. Towards the end of the mother's pregnancy they drop into the scrotum through a passageway in the groin. This passageway normally closes up naturally. A hydrocele develops when this passageway fails to close after birth. Fluid from inside the tummy can then flow through the passageway into the scrotum, causing the scrotum to appear swollen.

## What is a hydrocele repair?

In many cases, during the first years of life the passageway may close spontaneously and so the hydrocele resolves without any treatment being required. If your child's hydrocele does not resolve on its own, an operation will be offered. The operation to correct the hydrocele is carried out under general anaesthetic (when your child is put to sleep for the operation either by gases or injections of anaesthetic drugs). The questions that the Consultant might ask are below. Each question has a notes section, so that you can write anything down that might be relevant to answering a question before your appointment:

## What are the benefits of my child having a Hydrocele repair?

Hydrocele is a painless collection of fluid. When a hydrocele doesn't go away naturally, surgery is offered mainly for cosmetic reasons. Occasionally the fluid collection is large enough to cause some nuisance and embarrassment, particularly when your child is doing physical activities, playtime or sporting events. However, evidence suggests that the hydrocele does not affect the testicle's function.

## What does a Hydrocele repair involve?

The surgeon will make a small cut in the groin area and locate and close the passageway from the groin to the tummy.

The wound is then closed with dissolving stitches. If your son has a hydrocele on both sides, both sides can be operated on at the same time.

## Are there any alternatives to a Hydrocele repair?

An operation is the only way to treat a hydrocele which did not heal naturally.

## Instructions for after the operation

Please keep your child's wound clean and dry. Your child should not be bathed for five days after the operation, though gently wiping over the area with warm water is fine.

Your child should wear loose fitting clothes for a few days after their operation. Tight clothes can rub on the wound and make it sore.

Children 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') should be given to your child to prevent pain. Please follow the instructions on the bottle.

## What are the risks of the operation?

Complications from this operation are rare. They include:

- 1. Wound infection:** if your child's wound becomes red, there is increased tenderness, or the wound starts to leak fluid, contact your GP or your surgeon for some antibiotics.
- 2. Recurrence** of the hydrocele (it can come back): this will require another operation.
- 3. Injury to the sperm tube (vas):** please note this will not prevent your child from fathering children later on in life.
- 4. Injury to the blood vessels** of the testicles: this will cause reduced blood supply to the testicle leading to its atrophy (shrinking of testicle). This should not affect your child future growth and future chances to have children.
- 5. Testicular ascent** (where scar tissue under the skin will pull testicles up to the groin): this will require another operation.

## Looking after and sharing information about your child

We have a duty of care to help patients and families understand how information about them is kept and shared and we include the following information in all our patient leaflets:

Information is collected about patients relevant to their diagnosis, treatment and care. We store it in written records and electronically on computer. As a necessary part of that care and treatment we may have to share some patient information with other people and organisations who are either responsible or directly involved in the patient's care. This may involve taking the patient's information off site. We may also have to share some information for other purposes; such as research etc. Any information that is shared in this way will not identify the patient unless we have the patient's and parent's/carer's consent. If you have any questions and/or do not want us to share that information with others, please talk to the people looking after your child or contact PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison Service) on 0121 333 8403.

## Follow up

Usually for an uncomplicated operation like this one, no clinic follow up is arranged. Occasionally, your surgeon may decide to see your child again in clinic. In this case, you will be informed at the time of discharge when your child's review is scheduled for. This is generally in the outpatient department of Birmingham Children's Hospital.

Your clinic appointment will be sent in the post.

Any urgent or general concerns related to the operation after you go home could be reported to your GP or, out of hours, to your surgeon. The surgical team can be contacted via the hospital switchboard on 0121 333 9999.

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