

Lithotripsy (page 1 of 3)



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The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

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Lithotripsy is a non-surgical procedure used to treat kidney stones. A general anaesthetic is not required for this procedure, which is carried out using ultrasound and/or X-ray. These provide an image of your kidney stone so that pulses of energy (shock waves) can be focused on to it. Initially the shock waves will weaken the stone but may not break it completely so you may need more than one session of lithotripsy.

What will happen when I come into hospital?

The nursing staff will prepare you for the treatment when you arrive. After explaining the procedure we will ask you to sign a consent form. It is important that you stay as relaxed as possible during the treatment so if you have any questions or anxieties please tell us.

Please let the nurses and doctors know if:

- you are pregnant or think you might be pregnant
- you take any blood thinning medications (such as warfarin, aspirin, clopidogrel, dabigatran or apixaban)
- you feel unwell or have a temperature
- you think you may have a urine infection
- you have a heart pacemaker or defibrillator.

Before the treatment you will need to change into a gown and we will give you some pain relief in the form of tablets and/or a pain relief suppository. It is important you take these as the procedure can be painful without them. Please arrange for someone to pick you up after the procedure as some pain medication can make you feel sleepy.

What are the risks?

The most common risks of this procedure are:

- blood in the urine for a short period of time after the procedure
- pain in the kidney as the fragments of stone are passed
- infection which may require antibiotics. If you think you may have an infection you should see your GP and take a urine sample along for testing
- bruising to the skin where the procedure has been done
- need for further treatment
- failure to break up the stone which may require further intervention which will be discuss with you by your consultant.

Urology Nurses

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What will happen during the procedure?

- You will come into the treatment room and be met by the team who will explain things and answer any questions.
- Once you are happy you will be asked to lie on the treatment table, usually face down. This is because the kidneys are towards the back of the body and the treatment is more effective this way. However, if you have stones in the ureters (the tubes from the kidneys to the bladder), then it may be easier to treat you lying on your back.
- Once you are comfortable we will ask you not to move and to keep your breathing as shallow as possible. This is important, because when we locate the stone, we want it to stay as still as possible while we treat it.
- Before we put the lithotripter treatment head (a cushion with water inside) to your skin we will put some warm ultrasound jelly on the area. The purpose of the jelly is to create a good seal between your skin and the cushion. The jelly is water-based and will wash off.
- The treatment will last about 30 minutes. You will hear a clicking noise and feel a 'flicking' on your back/front. Some people have said that it feels a bit like a small electric shock.
- During the treatment we will slowly increase the power/intensity. It is important that we get to a good level of power to break/weaken the stone. It may feel uncomfortable but should be bearable, if it is too painful just let us know. We can adjust the power level, or give you some more painkillers.
- During the treatment we will monitor the stone to make sure it hasn't moved. We may need to move the table a little during the treatment to make sure we are accurately treating the stone.
- Sometimes the stone will change shape or start to fragment during the treatment and we may see this with the X-ray. Other times the 'breaking down' process takes a bit longer. Some stones are very hard and need more than one treatment.

What happens after the treatment?

You will go back to the ward area where the nursing staff will give you some refreshments and may keep you a short while depending on the pain relief medication you have had. The nursing staff will give you advice on what to do when you go home.

We will let you know what follow-up you need. This may be a further session of lithotripsy, a clinic appointment or an X-ray.

It is normal for:

- you to see some blood in your urine - just increase your fluid intake
- a bruise on your back (where the treatment head was placed)
- some intermittent pain as you pass fragments of stone (you can take painkillers).

If you have any of the following, seek medical attention:

- a fever or feeling generally unwell
- heavy bleeding or large clots of blood in the urine
- difficulty or inability passing urine
- severe pain in your kidneys, back or surrounding area.

Important

It is extremely important that you drink 2-3 litres of fluid each day after your treatment, for up to 7 days. Increased fluid will flush out the kidneys and aid the breaking down process. **If you do not drink, the treatment will NOT work!**

Stay as active as you can after the treatment. Walking and/or swimming is very good as it helps flush out the stone particles.