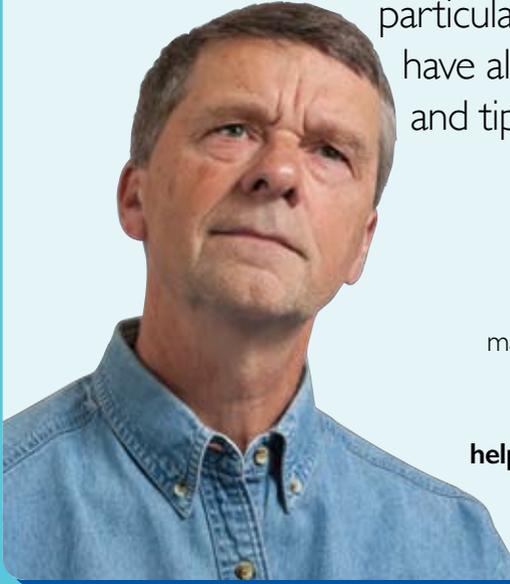


# Penile Cancer information sheet

## Glans resurfacing and Glansectomy

For further information on life after treatment,  
please refer to Orchid's main booklet:  
Penile Cancer; What you need to know.

Orchid is dedicated to supporting men with a diagnosis of penile cancer. This information sheet describes a particular treatment men may have along with any special care and tips we think may be helpful.



Orchid has a  
**Male Cancer Helpline**  
manned by specialist nurses on  
**0808 802 0010**  
or email  
**helpline@orchid-cancer.org.uk**

## Glans resurfacing

This procedure involves removing surface tissue from the glans or head of the penis and is used to treat pre-cancerous conditions or cancer that is localised. A small section of skin may be removed from the thigh to act as a skin graft to replace penile tissue that is removed. This is usually termed a split skin graft as only the surface cell layers of the skin will be used. In general post operative care will be similar to Glansectomy (see *After surgery*).

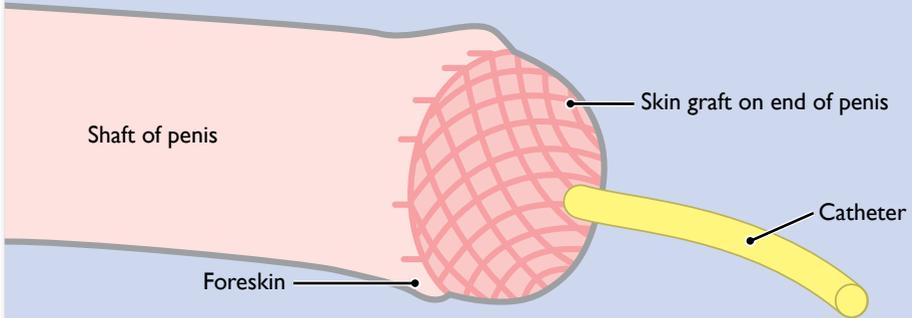
## Glansectomy

This is a surgical procedure to remove the whole of the glans or head of the penis (localised).

It is very important that men and their partners discuss this surgery with the specialist health team to ensure that they know exactly what to expect with regard to the appearance of the penis after surgery.

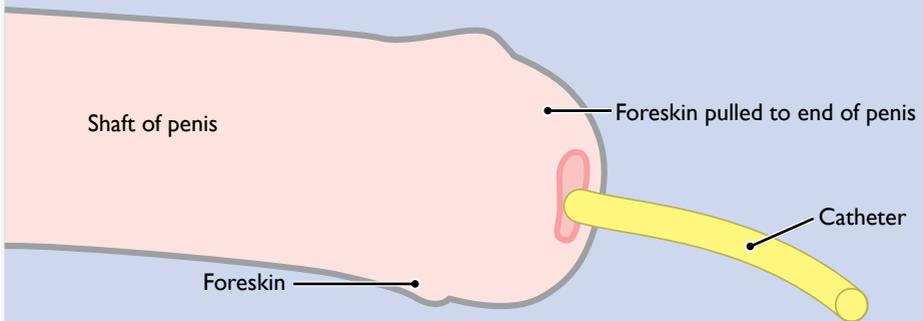
The amount of tissue removed will depend on the extent of the cancer that is present. However, to ensure there will be less chance of leaving any cancerous cells behind, about 2mm of surrounding tissue will also be removed (this is called a surgical margin).

**Fig. 1**



The glans penis (end) has been removed and a skin graft has been placed

**Fig. 2**



The glans penis (end) has been removed and the foreskin is used instead of a skin graft

To make the penis look as normal as possible after glansectomy, skin may be taken from the thigh and grafted over the area where the tissue was removed (**Fig. 1**). Alternatively, the foreskin may be used instead if there is no evidence it has been affected by cancer (**Fig. 2**).

To protect the urethra during the procedure, a catheter (urine drainage tube) will be inserted into the bladder. This will need to stay in place for 5 - 7 days and will help protect the skin graft.

## After surgery

- ▶ Painkillers will be given on a regular basis. It is important that painkillers are taken regularly as prescribed and not just when pain is felt.
- ▶ Men may need to remain in bed for up to 48 hours after the operation (this is called bed rest) to allow the skin graft to heal.
- ▶ The penis will have surgical dressings protecting it which will usually be left in place for up to 12 days. Doctors and nurses will check these dressings and the site of the operation regularly for signs of bleeding and infection. If no skin graft is present the dressing on the penis may be removed after 2 days at which time men should be able to bath or shower normally. Men should pat the operation site dry with a clean towel or gauze and avoid any material that may leave fibres on the site. Alternatively, a hair dryer can be used on a cold setting to gently dry the area.
- ▶ If a graft has been taken from the thigh, doctors and nurses will regularly check for signs of bleeding and infection and the dressing may be replaced prior to discharge. A waterproof dressing may be left in place for 2 weeks. Men will not need to stay in hospital for this time as it will usually be removed by a District Nurse at home.
- ▶ Stitches will be dissolvable but may take 4 - 6 weeks to fully dissolve.
- ▶ A minimum of 4 weeks off work will be required.

- ▶ A follow-up appointment will usually be made to check that the operation sites are healing satisfactorily and to discuss any further treatment that may be needed based on the results of the operation.
- ▶ **The colour of the skin graft will be a different colour to the penile skin when fully healed.**

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### Tips for surgery

- ▶ Always ask the specialist exactly what the surgery will involve and what to expect after the operation.
- ▶ Plan ahead with regard to time off work and allowing for the healing process.
- ▶ Try and maximise health prior to the operation by eating good quality foods and taking steady exercise such as walking.

### What is a positive margin?

Once cancerous tissue has been removed from the penis, it is carefully examined under a microscope to identify its full extent. Even if cancer was confined to the glans it may sometimes be found to be extending to the surgical resection margin. This may mean that there is more chance that microscopic cancer cells may become active again in the future. This is termed a positive margin and a policy of surveillance may be appropriate or if recommended further surgery.

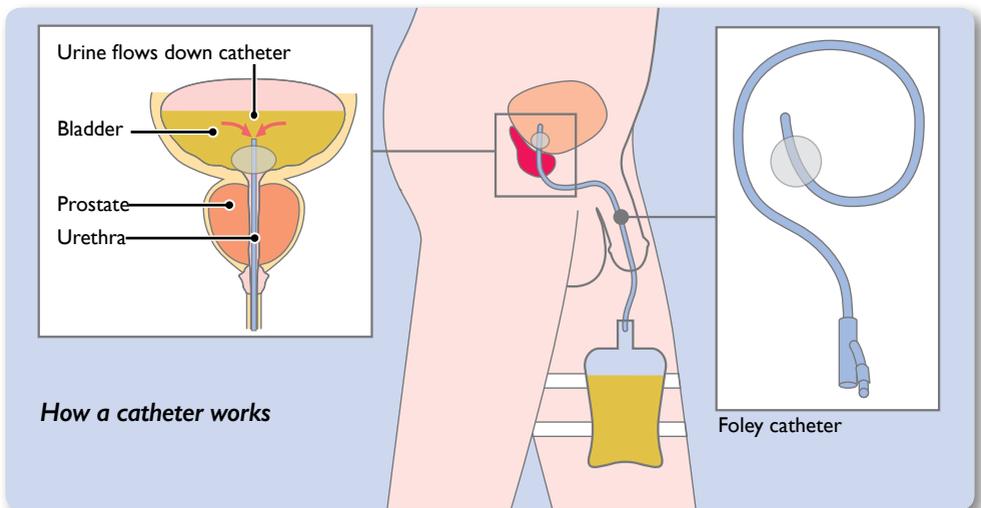
## Catheters

A catheter is a plastic tube that drains urine from the bladder. It will be connected to a leg drainage bag which can be left in place for up to a week. A bigger bag can be attached to the leg bag for drainage at night.

The catheter is held inside the bladder by a small balloon that is inflated with sterile water following insertion. It will therefore not usually come out unless properly removed by deflating the balloon. The balloon tends to rest over a sensitive area of nerves in the bladder which may be affected by its presence and these nerves are connected to nerves in the penile area. This irritation may make a man feel as if he needs to pass urine urgently and sometimes force a small amount of urine from around the catheter. Using a strap or tape to fix the join of the catheter to

the thigh or top of the leg to prevent it from pulling or dragging may be of help.

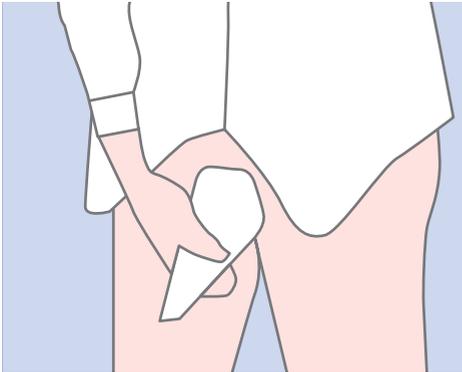
- ▶ Men should clean around the penis as instructed by the specialist team and should avoid any toiletries which may cause skin irritation and delay the healing process.
- ▶ The catheter should not be pulled or tugged.
- ▶ It is very important to drink 2 - 3 litres of fluid daily to flush the urine through and water based drinks tend to prevent bacteria forming which will help prevent urinary infection.
- ▶ When emptying or connecting catheter bags, hands should always be washed thoroughly with soap and water before and after the procedure.



## Urinary problems

Surgery to the penis is likely to cause swelling and possibly inflammation of the penis.

This may exert pressure to the urethra and cause the urinary stream to spray. It will usually settle in time and symptoms should improve as the body heals. However, if this proves bothersome, there are several types of disposable urinary funnel which can be purchased (see diagram below). Examples of these can be found on **amazon.co.uk**. Similar non-disposable devices are available on prescription and men should ask their GP or Practice nurse for details of these.



It is also possible to purchase a special key (**RADAR Key**) which allows anyone with a medical condition which has affected their urinary pattern to make use of otherwise locked or inaccessible toilets in the UK. It can be ordered from Disability Rights for a small fee. (**[www.disabilityrightsuk.org/radar-nks-key](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/radar-nks-key)** or **020 7250 8191**)

A 'Just Can't Wait' toilet card can also be obtained from the Bladder and Bowel Foundation again for a small fee which is universally recognised and may allow men access to toilets in the same way. (**<https://www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org/just-cant-wait-card-introduction/>** or **01926 357220**)

Men may be anxious following surgery that their normal daily work routine or lifestyle will be adversely affected by changes in their urinary habits as a result of treatment. It is important to understand that there are a number of other conditions which can affect the passage of urine such as an enlarged prostate gland or bladder weakness which are not related to treatment.

If men experience problems such as urinary frequency or trouble passing urine they should discuss these symptoms with their specialist healthcare team.

**Please see Orchid's booklet *Penile Cancer; What you need to know* for further information on these issues.**

## Men should seek advice from their healthcare team if they experience:

- ▶ Persistent bleeding from the operation site.
- ▶ Uncontrolled pain.
- ▶ A high temperature and shaking or feeling as if a bad cold is present which could be a sign of infection.
- ▶ Swelling, redness or a foul smelling discharge at the operation site or penis.
- ▶ Difficulty in passing urine.

**PLEASE REFER TO ORCHID'S BOOKLET  
*PENILE CANCER; WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW*  
FOR FURTHER ADVICE AND ADJUSTING TO LIFE AFTER SURGERY**

## Important contact numbers

Specialist Nurse contact no.:

District Nurse contact no.:

Men always need to make sure that the contact details of the specialist team are at hand should they need to contact them prior to follow-up appointments.

## Resources...

For further information and support on male cancer, please visit the Orchid website at [www.orchid-cancer.org.uk](http://www.orchid-cancer.org.uk)

Orchid has produced a series of leaflets and factsheets on specific issues relating to male cancer which can be downloaded from the website.

*Low-down*, Orchid's newsletter, features the latest news and developments in male cancer including research, treatments, new services and events.

## Written and edited by:

Orchid Cancer Appeal and  
Orchid Editorial Board  
March 2017

To be reviewed 2019

References to sources of information used in this booklet are available from Orchid. If you would like to comment on the information included in the booklet or make suggestions about future editions Orchid would like to hear your feedback.

Orchid is the UK's leading charity dedicated to supporting men and their families who are affected by male-specific cancers: testicular, prostate and penile.

Established in 1996 by a young testicular cancer patient and the oncologist who saved his life, Orchid works to improve the lives of people affected by male cancers through a world class research programme, educational campaigns and raising awareness and an extensive support service.

Orchid has a  
**Male Cancer Helpline**

manned by specialist nurses on

**0808 802 0010**

or email

**helpline@orchid-cancer.org.uk**

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