



# Penile Cancer information sheet

## Partial penectomy

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

ORCHID   
FIGHTING MALE CANCER



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](mailto:helpline@orchid-cancer.org.uk)**

## Partial penectomy

This is surgery to remove part of the penis. A section of skin may be taken from another area of the body such as the thigh to replace some of the tissue which has been removed (skin graft). It is very important that men and their partners discuss this surgery with their specialist health team to ensure that they know exactly what to expect with regard to the appearance of the penis afterwards.

### 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.
- ▶ The penis will have a surgical dressing covering it. This will usually be removed after 2 - 3 days. Once it is removed men should be able to have a shower; providing that they have not had a skin graft, they should pat the area dry with a clean towel or gauze and avoid any material that may leave fibres.
- ▶ If a skin graft has been used a waterproof dressing will be left in place usually for 2 weeks. Men will not need to stay in hospital for this time as care of the dressings can be managed by a community nurse.
- ▶ Any stitches will be dissolvable but may take 4 - 6 weeks to fully dissolve.
- ▶ Men will have a urinary catheter (urine drainage tube) which may need to remain for up to 5 days.
- ▶ If men do not have a catheter in when they are discharged from hospital it is important they avoid holding the operation site on their penis when they pass urine.

- ▶ It is best to avoid sexual intercourse for 8 weeks following surgery.
- ▶ Men will need a minimum 4 weeks off work.
- ▶ A follow up appointment will usually be made after a few weeks to check that the operation site is healing satisfactorily and to discuss the results of the operation. Any further treatment that may be recommended will usually be decided at this time.

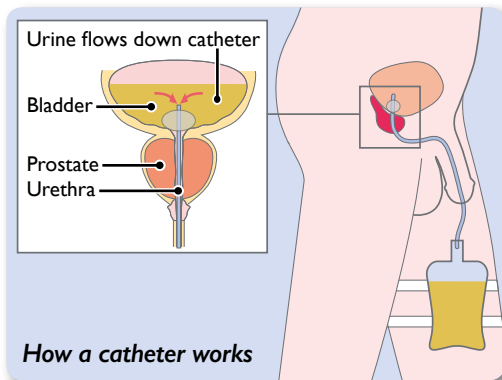
## Catheters

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.



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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.

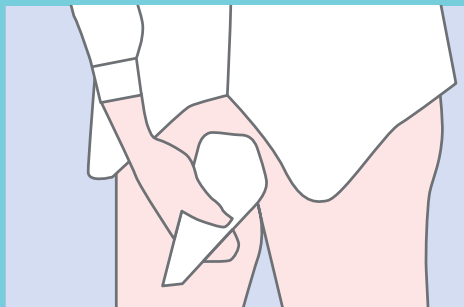
## What is a positive margin?

Once the penile tissue has been removed it is carefully examined under a microscope to identify the full extent of cancer. Sometimes the cancer may be found to be extending to the surgical resection margin (cut). This may mean that there is more chance that microscopic cancer cells may have escaped and may become active again in the future. This is termed a positive margin and in this situation a policy of surveillance may be appropriate or if recommended, further surgery.

## 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](https://www.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](https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/radar-nks-key) or **0207 250 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 medical 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.

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## Written and edited by:

Orchid Cancer Appeal and  
Orchid Editorial Board

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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.

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### ORCHID

60 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8AQ

[nurse@orchid-cancer.org.uk](mailto:nurse@orchid-cancer.org.uk)

[www.orchid-cancer.org.uk](http://www.orchid-cancer.org.uk)

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