

What is a Hydrocele?

It is a fluid filled sack along the spermatic cord within the scrotum. Hydroceles can occur on one or both sides.

In children, fluid drains incorrectly through the open tract from the abdomen into the scrotum where it becomes trapped causing enlargement of the scrotum.

Sometimes, and more commonly in older men, inflammation or trauma of the testis or epidymis can cause a hydrocele. Occasionally, a hydrocele may be associated with an inguinal hernia. Many occur for no obvious reason.

A hydrocele results in a painless, swollen scrotum, on one or both sides, that feels like a water-filled balloon.

Diagnosis is confirmed by examination, ultrasound or by transillumination (using light).

How is it treated?

Hydroceles are usually not dangerous and they are usually only treated if they cause discomfort or embarrassment.

There is little point in merely aspirating or withdrawing the fluid as the hydrocele usually recurs.

The Hydrocele repair operation

Hydrocele repair surgery is a simple procedure and the success rate is very high. The outcome is usually satisfactory.

This minor surgery is done as a day case using general or local anaesthesia with prompt recovery expected. The procedure only rarely requires a scrotal drainage tube or a large bulky dressing to the scrotal area.

How is it done?

You will be anaesthetised and pain free.

In children, an incision is made just above the groin. The open communication between the abdominal cavity and scrotum will then be repaired, the fluid is removed from the scrotum, and the incision is closed.

In adults, an incision is made in the scrotum, the fluid is drained and the hydrocele sac either everted or sewn up so that it cannot re-form.

Liberal use of local anaesthetic will help to reduce pain after the operation.

Any stitches will dissolve after 2 to 3 weeks and should not need removal.

Risks of the operation

There is a slight risk of breathing problems and medication reactions in anaesthesia. Possible complications of surgery include haematoma (blood clot formation), infection or injury to the scrotal tissue or structures. There is a small risk of recurrence.

At home

You will feel a little tired for a few days. Any local discomfort can be helped by your usual pain killers i.e. paracetamol. Heavy lifting and exercise should be avoided for 10 – 14 days after the surgery. Stitches should dissolve naturally after 2 to 3 weeks.

Do not drive or operate machinery nor make any major decisions until you have recovered. Ice packs may be kept close to the area for the first day after surgery to reduce the swelling. You are advised to wear close fitting underpants for support for a few weeks after surgery.

Important advice

If the wound becomes increasingly painful, inflamed or weeps, then please consult your GP immediately

For further information please contact:

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PATIENT INFORMATION



Hydrocele