

Information for patients having Uterine Artery Embolisation for Fibroids

What are Fibroids?

Fibroids are common non-cancerous growths. When they occur in the uterus, they can cause heavy bleeding, pelvic pressure and pain. They can also sometimes cause reproductive problems.

What is Uterine Artery Embolisation?

Uterine Artery Embolisation (UAE) is an alternative to hysterectomy for fibroids. The procedure is performed by a Radiologist, who is a doctor specialising in using X-rays and scans to guide treatment.

The treatment involves blocking the blood supply to the fibroids so that they shrink. Small particles are injected into the blood vessels that take the blood to the uterus. The particles are injected through a narrow tube, which is passed into the blood vessel at the groin.

The procedure is performed when you are awake, but a local anaesthetic is given and a PCA pump (Patient Controlled Analgesia) commenced. This is a method of providing pain relief that gives you immediate and continued control over the amount of analgesia you receive. A special pump containing morphine is connected to a drip that is placed in a vein. You are given a handset, which has a button that should be pressed if you are in pain. A small dose of morphine will be given directly into the vein. The machine then “locks out” usually for 5 minutes. This safety mechanism is to allow the dose to take effect.

What happens after the procedure?

After the procedure you will be transferred to the ward, the usual stay in hospital is for 24 to 36 hours. During this time you will be monitored. Only when alternative analgesia is controlling your pain will the PCA will be removed, usually after 24hours. You will experience some cramps and occasionally some bleeding.

What happens before I go home?

It is important that before you leave hospital you talk to a member of staff if you are worried about anything to do with your operation.

You will be given a follow up appointment either before you leave the ward or an appointment will be sent through the post.

If you are taking medicines, you will be given two weeks' supply of them before you go.

Where do I get more medicine if I need it?

If you need more of your medicines, you can get these from your GP.

How will I feel when I get home?

When you get home, do not be surprised if you find you get tired easily. You are advised to rest for 1 to 2 weeks before resuming all normal activities. During this time you may experience cramps and vaginal discharge and occasionally some bleeding. If the discharge becomes offensive and associated with high fever and feeling unwell there is the possibility of infection and you should seek advice as antibiotics may be necessary. If you are worried about any of your symptoms when you are at home please go and see your GP.

Risks and possible problems that could occur

It is usual to have some pain or discomfort following this procedure. You may experience

- infection
- fever
- haematoma – bruise around needle insertion site
- irregular or missed periods
- stopped periods – particularly if you are over 50
- passing the fibroid via the vagina can occasionally happen.

We will ensure that you have appropriate pain killers whilst in hospital and to take home.

Please talk to a member of staff if our have any questions about the information in this leaflet.

McCallum ward – 01803 655501

Coming to Hospital? Remember we're smoke free

