

TENSIONFREE VAGINAL TAPE (TVT)

Information for patients following surgery

The following information gives guidance after a tensionfree vaginal tape (TVT) procedure for ladies with urinary stress incontinence. We hope the information will be useful and answer most of the common questions which are asked. However if you have any additional concerns, please don't hesitate to ask your surgeon or one of the nurses looking after you.

HOW LONG WILL I BE IN HOSPITAL?

Most patients are in hospital for 24 hours or less.

HOW QUICKLY WILL I RECOVER?

Following discharge from hospital most ladies are able to get back to normal activities within a few days. However it will take a little longer to recover fully and it is recommended to advise your employer you will need approximately two weeks off work. Light household activities can be resumed very quickly but it is important to avoid heavy lifting for four weeks following surgery. It is quite common to have some mild tenderness in the pubic region which will normally improve with Paracetamol. You will be discharged home with some slightly stronger pain killers to take if necessary. Some patients have a small amount of vaginal bleeding and discharge which normally continues until the stitches in the vagina have dissolved completely, which may take four to six weeks.

WHEN CAN I RETURN TO WORK?

This depends on the type of job you have. Most women tend to return to work approximately two weeks following surgery but if you have a job which involves heavy lifting or standing for long periods, you may need a little longer at home.

WHEN CAN I DRIVE AGAIN?

It is probably safer to wait around one week before starting to drive. You should sit in your car and practise doing an emergency stop and as long as this doesn't hurt then you should be safe to go back on the road. It is important to inform your insurance company that you have had an operation, and that you have been given permission to start driving again, just to make sure you are adequately covered.

WHEN CAN I HAVE A SHOWER OR BATH?

It is probably better to have a shower rather than a bath for the first three to four days after your surgery. You can start doing this from the day after your operation. If you don't have a shower then it is fine to take a bath but it is important not to spend too long in the water as this will soak the wounds.

WHEN CAN I HAVE INTERCOURSE AGAIN?

The stitches in the vagina take approximately four to six weeks to dissolve and it is, therefore, better to avoid having intercourse for approximately a month following surgery. If you have a period it is also better to use a pad rather than a tampon as this may also introduce infection into the vagina.

WHEN CAN I START TO EXERCISE?

Light exercise, such as walking, can be started very quickly and gradually be built up over a few weeks. It is better to avoid high impact exercises, such as running for four weeks following surgery. You shouldn't go swimming for two weeks – if you are still having some vaginal discharge at this stage you will need to wait until this settles down completely.

WHEN CAN I TRAVEL OR FLY?

Although there is no physical reason why you cannot fly immediately after your operation it is normally better to stay in a local area for a couple of weeks following surgery just to make sure you don't develop any problems.

DO MY STITCHES NEED TO BE REMOVED?

The stitches in the vagina all dissolve on their own and do not need to be taken out. The stitches in the pubic hair also dissolve naturally after approximately two weeks. If the stitches haven't fallen out and the wounds are becoming a little red and sore then this may be a sign that the stitches need to be removed a little earlier. The nurses on the Gynaecology ward will be more than happy to do so for you or, alternatively, you could visit your local GP surgery.

COMMON PROBLEMS

DIFFICULTY EMPTYING

Approximately 5-10% of ladies will have some difficulty in emptying their bladder initially following a TVT procedure. In the vast majority of patients this settles down with time. If you do not think you are emptying completely when at home, rather than sitting on the toilet for a long while, it is better to leave the lavatory for around five minutes and then return to have a second go at passing urine – it takes the bladder muscle around five minutes to regain its tone before it will empty again. If you are having a lot of problems emptying or you are having pain in the lower part of your tummy then it is important to contact the Gynaecology ward or Day Surgery Unit who will arrange to see you quickly for assessment (please see telephone no below).

URINARY TRACT INFECTION

You will be given some antibiotics at the time of your operation but it is still quite common after bladder surgery to develop a urine infection. If this occurs you may go to the toilet very frequently during the day and night and have some burning or

stinging. It is important to drink several extra cups of fluid each day and if the problem persists, either contact the Gynaecology ward or your GP. A urine sample will be taken and you will probably be started on some more antibiotics.

VAGINAL BLEEDING

It is normal to have a small amount of vaginal bleeding after a TVT procedure. You may also have some discharge until the stitches dissolve over four to six weeks. If the discharge becomes very heavy or offensive this may be a sign of infection. Your doctor should be happy to prescribe some antibiotics for this.

URINARY URGENCY

It is quite common to have to sometimes rush to pass urine after a TVT procedure and this will normally settle down with time. If not, there are some medications which can sometimes be useful and a doctor/nurse will discuss this with you when you attend for a follow-up appointment.

THE PUBIC HAIR WOUNDS HAVE BECOME RED AND SORE

This sometimes occurs when the dissolvable stitches haven't fallen out. It is sometimes necessary to have the stitches removed by a nurse on the Gynaecology ward or by the nurse at your GP surgery. If the redness continues this can be a sign of infection and you should consult your GP for a prescription for some antibiotics if he/she feels this is necessary.

CONTACT NUMBERS

If you are having problems following your TVT procedure and would like extra help or advice, then please contact one of the following numbers:

Bupa Harpenden: Ambrose Ward – 01582 714427
 Westfield Ward – 01582 714428

Bupa Bushey: Lee Ward – 0208 901 5540
 Gade Ward – 0208 950 5544

If you would like any further information then please contact my secretary Margaret Hughes on 01727 730892 or Margaret@hertsgynae.com