

PRESS RELEASE

Women with heavy menstrual bleeding to benefit from guidance on fluid-filled thermal balloon and microwave endometrial ablation

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) has today issued guidance on the use of fluid-filled thermal balloon and microwave endometrial ablation techniques for heavy menstrual bleeding (menorrhagia) within the NHS in England and Wales. The guidance will help women who suffer from heavy menstrual bleeding by providing alternatives to hysterectomy and the other treatments currently available to treat this condition.

The guidance recommends fluid-filled thermal balloon endometrial ablation and microwave endometrial ablation as treatment options for women with heavy menstrual bleeding in cases where it has been decided by the woman and the clinician responsible for her treatment that surgical intervention is appropriate for the management of the condition.

The guidance goes on to recommend that the choice of surgical treatment should be made jointly by the woman and the clinician responsible for treatment. The decision should be made after an informed discussion taking into account the desired outcome of the treatment (such as reduced menstrual bleeding or complete cessation of menstrual bleeding [amenorrhoea]), the relative benefits of all other treatment options and the adverse events associated with them, and the specific medical circumstances of the woman (her condition, her suitability for the different surgical treatments, and her wishes).

Andrew Dillon, NICE Chief Executive and Executive Lead said: "This appraisal is another example of NICE working to ensure that effective new treatments are made

available to patients across the NHS. The process NICE follows is genuinely consultative and involves bringing all of the evidence together and engaging with professionals and patients. Today's guidance means that where surgery is a clinically appropriate way of managing heavy menstrual bleeding, women can choose from a wider range of alternative treatments."

Pat Thompson, Health Information Manager at Women's Health said: "Women's Health is pleased that NICE has approved these treatments for use in the NHS as they represent an important advance in the treatment of menorrhagia and offer women a wider choice. These treatment options are less invasive, with a quicker recovery time than hysterectomy. Menorrhagia is estimated to affect 1.5 million women in England and Wales and the guidance will be welcomed by patients who should now have the option to benefit from the new treatments where clinically appropriate. "

Ends

For more information contact Fraser Woodward on 020 7067 5905.

Notes to Editors

About NICE

1. NICE is part of the NHS. It is the independent organisation responsible for providing national guidance on treatments and care for those using the NHS in England and Wales. Its guidance is for healthcare professionals and patients and their carers to help them make decisions about treatment and healthcare. For further information about NICE you can visit www.nice.org.uk.
2. NICE produces guidance in three areas of health:
 - the use of new and existing medicines and treatments within the NHS in England and Wales – technology appraisals.
 - the appropriate treatment and care of patients with specific diseases and conditions within the NHS in England and Wales – clinical guidelines.
 - whether interventional procedures used for diagnosis or treatment are safe enough and work well enough for routine use – interventional procedures.

NICE also funds three enquiries that undertake research into the way patients are treated to identify ways of improving the quality of care (the investigations are known as confidential enquiries).

3. NICE guidance and recommendations are prepared by independent groups that include professionals working in the NHS and people who are familiar with the issues affecting patients and carers.

About technology appraisals

5. Technology appraisals are recommendations on the use of new and existing medicines and treatments within the NHS in England and Wales, such as:
 - medicines (for example, drugs)
 - medical devices (for example, hearing aids or inhalers)
 - diagnostic techniques (tests used to identify diseases)

- surgical procedures (for example, repairing hernias)
 - health promotion activities (for example, patient education models for diabetes).
5. Our technology appraisal recommendations are prepared by an independent Committee, that includes healthcare professionals working in the NHS and people who are familiar with the issues affecting patients and carers. The Committee considers the evidence on the clinical and cost effectiveness of the technology – this includes hearing the views of, and evidence from, clinical health professionals, experts and patients.
 6. NHS organisations in England and Wales have to make the resources and facilities available to enable NICE guidance to be implemented. In January 2002 the Government announced a legal obligation for the NHS to provide funding for treatments and drugs recommended by NICE as a part of its technology appraisals work programme.

About Women's Health

7. Women's Health is a national voluntary organisation which provides independent, accessible and quality health information for women. Women's Health specialises in gynaecological and sexual health issues. Services include a Helpline, a quarterly newsletter and a series of information booklets on issues such as fibroids, hysterectomy, ovarian problems, heavy bleeding and the menopause. Independent from the National Health Service and private companies, Women's Health aims to support women in making informed choices about their health. For further information telephone 0845 125 5254 or visit www.womenshealthlondon.org.uk