

Laparoscopic laser myomectomy

**Understanding NICE guidance –
information for women considering
the procedure, and for the public**

November 2003

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Issue date: November 2003

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National Institute for Clinical Excellence

MidCity Place
71 High Holborn
London
WC1V 6NA

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About this information

This information describes the guidance that the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) has issued to the NHS on a procedure called laparoscopic laser myomectomy. It is not a complete description of what is involved in the procedure – the patient's healthcare team should describe it in detail.

NICE has looked at whether laparoscopic laser myomectomy is safe enough and works well enough for it to be used routinely for the treatment of uterine fibroids.

To produce this guidance, NICE has:

- looked at the results of studies on the safety of laparoscopic laser myomectomy and how well it works
- asked experts for their opinion
- asked the views of the organisations that speak for the healthcare professionals and the patients and carers who will be affected by this guidance.

This guidance is part of NICE's work on 'interventional procedures' (see 'Further information' on page 10).

About laparoscopic laser myomectomy

Fibroids are non-cancerous growths. When they occur in the uterus (womb), they can cause heavy bleeding and pressure and pain in the abdomen; they can also sometimes make it difficult for a woman to carry a pregnancy to term.

Generally, fibroids only need to be removed if they are causing symptoms. Laparoscopic laser myomectomy is a technique that allows individual fibroids to be destroyed. It involves passing a very fine flexible telescope (a laparoscope) and a laser fibre through small cuts in the abdomen and through the uterus wall to reach the fibroids. The laser is then used to destroy the fibroids. The procedure is carried out under a general anaesthetic. If the symptoms are improved after the procedure, the woman may not need to have her uterus removed (this means that she may be able to become pregnant in the future).

A more common treatment for fibroids is hysterectomy, which involves removing the woman's uterus in an operation carried out under general anaesthetic. A woman cannot become pregnant after she has had her uterus removed.

How well it works

What the studies said

There were not enough high-quality studies available for NICE to decide if this treatment was useful to treat women with fibroids.

What the experts said

The experts thought that it was unclear which women with fibroids may benefit from the treatment. One expert noted that the procedure was only suitable for removing small fibroids, which do not tend to cause symptoms and do not normally need surgery.

Risks and possible problems

What the studies said

There was not enough evidence for NICE to decide if this procedure was safe enough to be used routinely.

What the experts said

The experts were concerned about the risks involved in surgery using a laparoscope and laser. These include damage to the bowel and the urinary tract. They were also concerned that, if the woman later becomes pregnant, the scar from the operation could open up during childbirth.

What has NICE decided?

NICE has decided that, if a doctor wants to carry out laparoscopic laser myomectomy, he or she should make sure that the patient understands what is involved and that there are still uncertainties over the safety of the procedure and how well it works. There should be special arrangements in place so that the patient only agrees (consents) to the procedure after this discussion has taken place. The doctor should provide the patient with written information about the procedure's risks and benefits.

NICE also decided that doctors should make sure that special arrangements are in place for research and monitoring of what happens after a woman has had this treatment.

NICE noted that there is a need to make sure that doctors who want to carry out laparoscopic laser myomectomy are properly trained according to the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists' recommendations.

What the decision means for you

Your doctor may have offered you laparoscopic laser myomectomy. NICE has considered this procedure because it is relatively new. NICE has decided that there are uncertainties about the benefits and risks of laparoscopic laser myomectomy that you need to understand before you agree to it. Your doctor should discuss the benefits and risks with you. Some of these benefits and risks may be described above.

Further information

You have the right to be fully informed and to share in decision-making about the treatment you receive. You may want to discuss this guidance with the doctors and nurses looking after you.

You can visit the NICE website (www.nice.org.uk) for further information about the National Institute for Clinical Excellence and the Interventional Procedures Programme. A copy of the full guidance on laparoscopic laser myomectomy is on the NICE website (www.nice.org.uk/IPG023guidance), or you can order a copy from the website or by telephoning the NHS Response Line on 0870 1555 455 and quoting reference number N0360. The evidence that NICE considered in developing this guidance is also available from the NICE website.

If you want more information on uterine fibroids, a good starting point is NHS Direct (telephone 0845 46 47), or NHS Direct Online (www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk).

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