

# Holmium laser prostatectomy

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

November 2003

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**Issue date:** November 2003

### **To order copies**

Copies of this booklet can be ordered from the NHS Response Line; telephone 0870 1555 455 and quote reference number N0343. A version in Welsh and English is also available, reference number N0344. Mae fersiwn yn Gymraeg ac yn Saesneg ar gael hefyd, rhif cyfeirnod N0344. The NICE interventional procedures guidance on which this information is based is available from the NICE website ([www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)). Copies can also be obtained from the NHS Response Line, reference number N0342.

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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 holmium laser prostatectomy. 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 holmium laser prostatectomy is safe enough and works well enough for it to be used routinely for the treatment of benign prostatic obstruction.

To produce this guidance, NICE has:

- looked at the results of studies on the safety of holmium laser prostatectomy 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 holmium laser prostatectomy

The prostate is a small gland that sits under a man's bladder and around his urethra (the tube that carries urine from the bladder to the end of the penis). As men get older it is common for their prostate gland to get larger. This can cause problems with passing urine because as the prostate enlarges, it can press on the urethra and interfere with the passage of urine. This condition is called benign prostatic obstruction (BPO).

Holmium laser prostatectomy is a procedure used to destroy some of the prostate with the aim of improving the flow through the urethra. A small tube is inserted into the urethra and heat generated by a special laser at its tip breaks down the extra tissue in the prostate. Following the operation any fluid is drained through a small tube (catheter) in the urethra.

The standard surgical treatment for BPO is to cut away the middle of the enlarged prostate. This operation is known as transurethral resection of the prostate (TURP for short).

## How well it works

### What the studies said

The studies NICE looked at showed that holmium laser prostatectomy works as well as TURP. The studies also showed that men don't need to use a catheter for as long after holmium laser prostatectomy and can leave hospital sooner. However, the studies did not look at large numbers of men over a long period of time.

### What the experts said

The experts agreed that holmium laser prostatectomy helps men with BPO. It may be a better treatment than TURP for many men as it means a shorter stay in hospital. However, some experts were concerned that some prostate tissue may be left in the bladder after the procedure.

## **Risks and possible problems**

### **What the studies said**

The studies showed that holmium laser prostatectomy is as safe as TURP, and that there may be less bleeding after holmium laser prostatectomy than after TURP.

### **What the experts said**

The experts agreed that holmium laser prostatectomy is safe. One expert expressed concern that the bladder may be damaged during treatment.

## What has NICE decided?

NICE has considered the evidence on holmium laser prostatectomy. It has recommended that when doctors use it for men with BPO, they should be sure that:

- the patient understands what is involved and agrees (consents) to the treatment, and
- the results of the procedure are monitored.

NICE has also noted that there is a need to make sure that doctors wishing to undertake this procedure are specially trained. The British Society of Urological Surgeons will be issuing training standards for doctors.

## What the decision means for you

Your doctor may have offered you holmium laser prostatectomy. NICE has considered this procedure because it is relatively new. NICE has decided that the procedure is safe enough and works well enough for use in the NHS. Nonetheless, you should understand the benefits and risks of holmium laser prostatectomy 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](http://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 holmium laser prostatectomy is on the NICE website ([www.nice.org.uk/IPG017guidance](http://www.nice.org.uk/IPG017guidance)), or you can order a copy from the website or by telephoning the NHS Response Line on 0870 1555 455 and quoting reference number N0342. The evidence that NICE considered in developing this guidance is also available from the NICE website.

If you want more information on prostate diseases, a good starting point is NHS Direct (telephone 0845 46 47), or NHS Direct Online ([www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)).

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