

Intramedullary distraction for lower limb lengthening

Information for the public

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There is not enough evidence about how well this procedure works or how safe it is. This type of procedure can cause complications. So, it can only be done with special arrangements. This means you will have regular appointments afterwards to check how well it is working or if it has caused problems.

People can have different length legs from birth, or because of disease or injury. In this procedure, under general anaesthesia, a bone in the shorter leg is cut surgically and a metal lengthening device (distractor) is put inside the bone (intramedullary) across the cut bone. It may be done to a bone in the upper or lower leg. After the operation, the device is gradually lengthened while new bone forms across the cut, so increasing the length of the bone. There are different techniques used to lengthen the distractor depending on the device used. The process of lengthening and healing takes several months, during which partial weight bearing is possible. The main aim is to lengthen the leg and reduce disability.

Is this procedure right for me?

You should be included in [making decisions about your care](#).

Your healthcare professionals should explain the risks and benefits of this procedure and how it is done. They should discuss your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns. They should offer you more information about the procedure. Your family or carers can be involved if you want or need them to be.

You will be asked to decide whether you agree (consent) to have the procedure. Find out more about [giving consent to treatment on the NHS website](#).

Some questions to think about

- How many appointments will I need?
- What are the possible benefits? How likely am I to get them?
- What are the risks or side effects? How likely are they?
- Will I have to stay in hospital?
- What happens if it does not work or something goes wrong?
- What happens if I do not want the procedure?
- Are other treatments available?

More information

- [NICE's information on HealthTech guidance](#) explains what HealthTech is and how we assess it.
- [NICE's information on HealthTech recommendations](#) explains what special arrangements are.

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