Your Ureteric Stent: A Patient's Guide

Your urologist has decided that you need to have a Ureteric stent. This leaflet is designed to answer some of the questions you may have.

What is a ureteric stent?

A ureteric stent is a hollow tube made of soft plastic which is place in your ureter.

Why do I need a stent?

There are many reasons for having a stent. Three common reasons are:

1. To help relieve an obstruction in the ureter.
2. To allow a large stone to be treated.
3. After an operation on the ureter, to protect it whilst it heals.

There are other reasons as well, which your urologist will discuss with you if necessary.

How is the stent inserted?

Most stents are inserted under an anaesthetic. Through a cyst scope (a telescope passed through the urethra into the bladder), a wire is passed up through the ureter to the kidney, and the stent is threaded over it.

How does it stay in place?

When the stent is correctly positioned the guide wire is removed and the top an bottom ends form a pigtail shape. The pigtails help to keep the stent secure.

How long do I need to have the stent?

This depends on the reason why you had the stent inserted. Many people only need stents for a short time, but some patients do need them for long periods. Your urologist will advise you as to how long you are likely to need it.

Will I know the stent is there?

Many patients do not feel any different with a stent inserted, but some people are aware of an ache in their side, particularly just after they have passed urine. Temporary discomfort when passing water is common and usually settles and often passes within a few days. You may notice a small amount of blood in your urine, this is quite common, and usually improves if you increase your intake of fluids. Women are sometimes aware of a feeling of bearing down' this may go away as your body becomes accustomed to the stent.

How is the stent removed?

Some stents which are left in for short periods have a fine thread attached to the lower pigtail (the one in the bladder). This thread is passed along the urethra, to stay outside the body, the stent is easily removed by gently pulling the thread.
If the stent does not have a thread attached, a cystoscope will need to be passed into the bladder and the stent drawn out. In many cases this is a short simple procedure and can be done under local anaesthetic.

**Can I work with the stent in?**

In most cases yes, but if you have any concerns, discuss them with your urologist.

**Can I play sport?**

If you have a stent with a thread attached, you should avoid contact sports as it is possible to dislodge the stent. Gentle exercise is safe for most people.

**Is it OK to have sex?**

Having a stent should not affect your being able to have intercourse, but if you have a stent with a thread attached, it is important that this thread is protected so that the stent is not dislodged. Men with this type of stent may prefer to use a condom to keep the thread secure.

**Can the stent fall out by itself?**

Very occasionally this can happen. If it does, you should contact your GP who will advise you about arrangements to see your urologist.

**How long do stents last?**

Stents can remain quite safely in the body for long periods of time, if necessary up to 6 months. However, if your stent is still in place after 2 months, please contact us.

**What happens if the stent needs to be replaced?**

If you need a stent for a long period, your urologist may recommend the stent is changed from time to time. Replacement is performed under an anaesthetic and the procedure is very similar to when your first stent was inserted.

**Is there anything special I should do?**

It is important to ensure that your kidneys are draining well. You should drink at least one and a half litres (approx. 3 pints) of water each day.

**When should I call my GP?**

If you experience any of the following, you should call your doctor.

1. You feel unwell with a fever, abdominal pain, or burning when you pass urine.
2. You experience severe pain in your side.
3. You pass a large amount of blood in your urine.
4. The stent falls out.

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