



## Fitter Better Sooner

Endorsed by:



# Preparing for a hysteroscopy

### What is a hysteroscopy?

A hysteroscopy is an operation to look at the inside of your womb (uterus). A narrow telescope (called a hysteroscope) lets your surgeon look at the inside of your womb. This telescope is passed through your vagina and the entrance to your womb (cervix) so doesn't require any cuts to be made in your skin. This procedure can be carried out either at an outpatient clinic or at a hospital.

### What type of anaesthetic will I have?

Your gynaecologist might be able to do this procedure in the clinic using a smaller hysteroscope. If so, a local anaesthetic injection can then be used to numb the entrance to your womb (cervix).

If you have the procedure done in a hospital operating theatre you may be given:

- a **general anaesthetic** – anaesthetic drugs which make you unconscious, so that you will feel nothing throughout your operation
- a **local anaesthetic** to numb your cervix
- a **spinal anaesthetic** – the lower half of your body is numbed by an injection in your lower back
- you may also be offered **sedation** (medicine to relax you).

Your anaesthetist will talk with you about the ways in which you can have your anaesthetic – based on your health, age and other medical conditions. Together you can choose the best method for you.

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### How long will I be in hospital for?

You should be able to go home the same day.

### Before the operation

- Think about what you can do to improve your health before the operation. Stopping smoking, reducing how much alcohol you drink, eating more healthily and keeping active all help you recover more quickly after surgery.
- Ask your GP practice about lifestyle support available to you. You can also find useful advice at [nhs.uk/better-health](https://www.nhs.uk/better-health).
- If you have existing medical conditions (eg diabetes, high blood pressure, chest or heart disease), check with your GP that your medication is up to date and as effective as it can be. This can help prevent delays to your surgery and give you the best chance of your operation and recovery going well.
- Make sure you have some painkillers, such as paracetamol, available at home. The hospital will talk with you about how best to take these. Although recovery from a hysteroscopy is not usually painful, you may experience some discomfort similar to period cramps.
- It is normal to experience some bleeding after a hysteroscopy, so make sure that you have sanitary towels available at home.
- It's also important to have good dental hygiene and for your teeth and gums to be in good condition before the surgery, as this will reduce the risk of infection.
- If you are having a general anaesthetic, spinal anaesthetic or sedation for your procedure, you should arrange for an adult to take you home and be with you the first night at home after surgery. If you have others you care for, you should arrange appropriate help for them too.
- You should take your normal medication to the hospital, in their original packaging. The staff will advise you on how to take it on the day of the operation. Check you have enough medication to last you for a few weeks when you return home.
- Remember to wear any hearing aids and take some spare batteries.
- It is normal to feel anxious about an operation. To help you relax before and after your surgery, think about bringing some headphones and music with you, or something to read or do. Think about learning some breathing exercises or relaxation techniques.
- On the morning of surgery (or the evening before) you should have a bath or shower. You may be given an antiseptic to wash with to help reduce the risk of infection.
- Your stomach needs to be empty during surgery. The hospital will advise you in advance on when to stop drinking and eating on the day of the operation. It's important to drink plenty of water until you are told to stop to help you feel better after surgery and reduce complications.



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- You should be able to drive 24 hours after your anaesthetic or sedation, provided you feel well enough to do so.
- You should consider taking one or two days off work to recover.

## After the operation

- Recovery after a hysteroscopy is usually quick
- You may feel a bit drowsy or unsteady at first
- It is normal to experience some discomfort and cramping like period pains
- You may have some light bleeding or spotting for up to a week.

## Recovering at home

- If you've had a general anaesthetic, you may feel tired afterwards for a day or two as your body recovers. It's a good idea to take things easy and not make too many plans for the few days after you get home.
- If you have discomfort or period/cramp-like pains, you should take painkillers as instructed by the hospital.
- You should avoid having sex for a week, or until any bleeding has stopped, to reduce the chance of infection.
- The light bleeding or spotting can last for up to a week. You should avoid tampons and use sanitary towels instead to reduce the risk of infection.
- Most people will need to take one or two days off work. You can self-certify for this, but you can ask the hospital for a fit (sick) note to cover this period.
- You can start driving again after 24 hours if you feel well enough to do so.

## Things to look out for at home

You should contact your GP or the hospital where you had your surgery if:

- you have severe pain that is not helped by regular painkillers
- if you are having to change sanitary towels more frequently than normal
- you pass bright red or large clots of blood
- you develop a foul-smelling vaginal discharge
- you have a high temperature/fever over 38°C.

These symptoms may occur if you have developed an infection and may need further treatment, usually with antibiotics.

**If you feel very unwell you should go to your nearest emergency department as soon as possible.**

## Preparing for a hysteroscopy

### Additional resources available online

#### Royal College of Anaesthetists

- Preparing for surgery: Fitter Better Sooner toolkit and animation ([rcoa.ac.uk/fitterbettersooner](https://rcoa.ac.uk/fitterbettersooner)).
- You and your anaesthetic and Your spinal anaesthetic ([rcoa.ac.uk/patientinfo/leaflets-video-resources](https://rcoa.ac.uk/patientinfo/leaflets-video-resources)).
- Caring for someone who has had a general anaesthetic or sedation ([rcoa.ac.uk/patientinfo/sedation](https://rcoa.ac.uk/patientinfo/sedation)).
- Risks associated with your anaesthetic ([rcoa.ac.uk/patientinfo/risks](https://rcoa.ac.uk/patientinfo/risks)).
- Patient information series ([rcoa.ac.uk/patientinfo/leaflets-video-resources](https://rcoa.ac.uk/patientinfo/leaflets-video-resources)).



#### Centre for Perioperative Care

- Information for patients ([cpoc.org.uk/patients](https://cpoc.org.uk/patients)).

#### NHS Choices

- Hysteroscopy ([nhs.uk/conditions/hysteroscopy](https://nhs.uk/conditions/hysteroscopy)).

#### Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists

- Outpatient hysteroscopy ([bit.ly/3N6zvVa](https://bit.ly/3N6zvVa)).

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If you have any general comments, please email them to: [patientinformation@rcoa.ac.uk](mailto:patientinformation@rcoa.ac.uk)



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This leaflet has been reviewed by the RCoA Patient Information Group (which includes lay members) and by the RCoA Professional Standards Advisory Group.

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This leaflet will be reviewed within three years of the date of publication.

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