

# Having lymph nodes removed from your groin (inguinal block dissection)

Cancer Services

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Information for patients with skin cancer

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## What is inguinal block dissection?

An inguinal block dissection is an operation to remove lymph nodes in your groin. Other names for this operation are inguinal lymphadenectomy and groin clearance. The operation is performed under general anaesthetic (whilst you are asleep) and takes about two hours.

## What are lymph nodes?

Lymph nodes (also called glands) are part of the lymphatic system. They carry filtered fluid back to the main circulation and also have an important role in the immune system. They be affected by many diseases (such as cancer) and infections.

## Why do my lymph nodes need removing?

Once a lymph node has been shown to contain cancer cells, there is a chance that other nearby lymph nodes may also contain cancer. The purpose of the operation is to remove lymph nodes in your groin that already have cancer cells in them or have a high chance of developing cancer cells.

## Are there any possible complications?

As with any operation, complications can occasionally occur. These include:

**Anaesthetic risk** - the anaesthetist will discuss with you any possible complications before your operation.

**Deep vein thrombosis (DVT)** - this is a clot in the leg veins. We give patients compression stockings to wear and sometimes a blood-thinning injection to prevent this. If not treated a clot can break off and become lodged in the circulation to the lungs (pulmonary embolism) which can be serious.

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

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To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

## Are there any possible complications? (continued)

**Bleeding and infection** - the surgeon will put a drain in your groin and this will usually prevent the build up of any blood at the wound site, but another operation is sometimes necessary to remove a collection of blood. You will usually have a course of antibiotics while the drain is in place to reduce the risk of infection.

**Nerve damage** - the inside of your thigh will be permanently numb as the nerves for this area travel through the group of lymph nodes removed during the operation. Some of the nerves affecting leg movement or sensation may not work properly after the operation. Usually (but not always) this gets better over time. However, some patients are left with a limp.

**Wound breakdown** - if the skin breaks down it can usually be treated with dressings, but occasionally another operation may be required.

**Seroma** - this is a collection of fluid in the groin, and is a very common problem after this operation. This will get better over time, but you may need to come to the Dressing Clinic so that we can drain the fluid using a needle and syringe. This may need to be repeated several times.

**Lymphoedema** - this is permanent swelling of the leg which can happen once the lymph nodes have been removed. If this happens we will refer you to the lymphoedema nurse.

## What happens before my operation?

You will probably have a pre-assessment appointment before your operation. At this appointment you will be seen by a nurse and sometimes an anaesthetist. Any necessary tests, such as blood tests, are carried out at this appointment so that everything runs smoothly on the day of your operation.

You will come into hospital on the day of your operation. You should bring all your regular medications and any clothes you will need. You should remove all jewellery, especially rings on your fingers.

You will see your surgeon and anaesthetist, who will answer any questions you may have. Your surgeon will ask you to sign a consent form.

## What happens during the operation?

The surgeon makes a cut in the skin in your groin, through which the lymph nodes are removed. These lymph nodes are sent to the laboratory to be examined.

A drain is left in the wound to drain away any excess fluid. The wound will usually be closed with dissolvable stitches (they do not need removing) and a dressing will be placed over the wound.

## What happens after the operation?

You will have a wound drain that will stay in place for several days. You may go home with the drain still in place. If so, you will be asked to come back to the Burns and Plastics Dressing Clinic at Leicester Royal Infirmary to have the drain removed.

You may have some discomfort after your operation: please ask your nurse for pain killers if you are in pain.

## What happens when I go home?

Before you go home we will give you an appointment to be seen in Burns and Plastics Dressing Clinic so that we can check your wound.

You will also receive an outpatient appointment a few weeks after your operation. This is so that we can discuss with you what was found in the lymph nodes removed and talk to you about what further treatment (if any) is needed.

If you have any problems or questions between visits, please contact us on the telephone numbers below. We may need to bring your hospital appointment forward.

## Going back to work

Most people need four weeks off work if they are doing light duties, but you may need up to three months off work if your job involves manual tasks and heavy lifting. Please ask your doctor or nurse for further information.

## Key workers

If you have any questions about your operation please contact:

**Skin Cancer Nurse Specialist team: 0116 258 6170**

**Or the consultants' secretaries** who will direct you as needed:

Telephone: 0116 258 5851

0116 258 5286

0116 258 5786

You will have been given a card with the number to call if you have any problems after your operation.

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔  
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