

Extracorporeal shockwave therapy for Peyronie's disease

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

December 2003



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**Extracorporeal shockwave therapy for Peyronie's disease:
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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 extracorporeal shockwave therapy. 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 extracorporeal shockwave therapy is safe enough and works well enough for it to be used routinely for the treatment of Peyronie’s disease.

To produce this guidance, NICE has:

- looked at the results of studies on the safety of extracorporeal shockwave therapy 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 extracorporeal shockwave therapy

In Peyronie's disease, a plaque or hard lump forms in the tissue of the penis. It is not known what causes the disease. The plaque makes the penis less flexible, causing pain and making the penis bend when it is erect. Many men with Peyronie's disease have sexual problems because they cannot get or maintain a normal erection.

A small number of men with Peyronie's disease will get better without treatment but drug therapy or radiation are normally used. Surgery is only generally used for men who have not responded to these or for men with severe symptoms. The treatments are designed to improve the symptoms of the disease rather than to cure it.

Extracorporeal shockwave therapy (ESWT) uses vibrations caused by sound waves to treat the affected tissue. The sound waves come from a device applied to the outside of the body that generates short bursts of sound, called 'sonic pulses'. The plaques on the penis are targeted, normally using ultrasound as a guide. Sometimes a sedative drug is given to help the man relax.

How well it works

What the studies said

The studies NICE looked at showed that men had less pain and the curve of the penis was reduced after having ESWT. In one study of 20 men, half had a considerable improvement in the bend in the penis. There was also some improvement in sexual problems.

What the experts said

The experts were not convinced by the evidence that this procedure works well enough for men with Peyronie's disease. The types of studies, differences between the men having the disease and the natural progression of the disease meant the experts were uncertain about its usefulness.

Risks and possible problems

What the studies said

Few complications were reported in the studies. Short-term problems included bleeding from the urethra (the tube that carries urine from the bladder to the end of the penis), bruising, collection of blood under the skin and small broken blood vessels. It was not clear, however, how the dose of ESWT given affected the complications.

What the experts said

The experts did not have concerns about the safety of this procedure, although they noted that superficial bruising and some pain were possible problems.

What has NICE decided?

NICE has decided that this procedure appears safe. However, if a doctor wants to carry out ESWT for Peyronie's disease, he or she should make sure that the man understands what is involved and that there are still uncertainties over how well the procedure works. There should be special arrangements in place so that the patient only agrees (consents) to the procedure after this discussion has taken place. There should also be special arrangements in place for monitoring what happens when a person has ESWT for Peyronie's disease.

What the decision means for you

Your doctor may have offered you ESWT. NICE has considered this procedure because it is relatively new. NICE has decided that there are uncertainties about the benefits of ESWT which you need to understand 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) for further information about the National Institute for Clinical Excellence and the Interventional Procedures Programme. A copy of the full guidance on ESWT for Peyronie's disease is on the NICE website (www.nice.org.uk/IPG029guidance), or you can order a copy from the website or by telephoning the NHS Response Line on 0870 1555 455 and quoting reference number N0388. The evidence that NICE considered in developing this guidance is also available from the NICE website.

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