

Free-functioning gracilis transfer to restore upper limb function in brachial plexus injury

Information for the public

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This procedure works well to restore upper limb function in brachial plexus injury. But serious complications are common including pain, bleeding, infection and graft failure. This procedure should only be done in a specialist brachial plexus unit by a multidisciplinary team.

The brachial plexus is a network of nerves coming from the neck and supplying muscles in the arm. Damage to these nerves can cause muscle paralysis, which stops the arm working properly. In this procedure, a piece of hamstring muscle and its nerve and blood supply (free-functioning gracilis) are taken from the inner thigh, transferred to the arm and joined to the damaged nerve. The aim is to restore arm function, usually bending the elbow. Long-term physiotherapy after the procedure is needed.

The [NHS website](#) may have information on your condition and treatment options.

You can [search the NHS website for information about consultants and hospitals](#) that offer this procedure.

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 interventional procedures guidance](#) explains what an interventional procedure is and how we assess it.
- [NICE's information on interventional procedure recommendations](#) explains what standard arrangements are.

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