

What can I expect after uterine fibroid embolisation?

This leaflet provides information about what happens after your uterine fibroid embolisation. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is uterine fibroid embolisation and why do I need to have it?

A fibroid is a benign (non-cancerous) growth of the womb. Uterine fibroids are sometimes called uterine myomas, fibromyomas or leiomyomas. To treat your fibroids, you have agreed to have a procedure called uterine fibroid embolisation (UFE). UFE is a non-surgical way of treating fibroids by blocking off the arteries that feed the fibroids. The procedure will take place in the interventional radiology (IR) department. You will have received information about the procedure itself prior to consenting to treatment.

What happens after the procedure?

Immediately after the procedure, you will be observed in the IR recovery area. You will have a urinary catheter in place (a thin, flexible tube inserted into the bladder to drain your urine), as well as the drip for the morphine pump and fluids. Once we are satisfied that you are recovering well, you will be taken back to the ward.

It is important that you lie flat for four hours after the procedure to allow the arterial puncture sites to heal. During this time, we will check your pulse, blood pressure and oxygen levels at regular intervals. We will also check the puncture sites in your groin to check for any bleeding.

To ensure that you are made comfortable and that your pain is well controlled, we will provide you with painkillers through the morphine pump and orally (by mouth).

The morphine pump and the urinary catheter will be removed the day after the procedure. You should expect to be in hospital overnight, or for one or two days, and can go home once your pain is adequately controlled.

What can I expect when I get home?

Once you are at home, you can eat and drink normally. You should also continue with your usual medications unless your doctor has advised you not to. If you take any diabetic medicines containing metformin, please do not take them for two days after your procedure. Contrast medium (an x-ray dye) is injected during the procedure so that the doctor can identify the arteries. This can cause temporary damage to the kidneys, especially in diabetics or those who already have kidney impairment. Your body may not clear metformin completely if your kidneys are damaged, so it is safer to stop metformin briefly.

You will experience pain and flu-like symptoms for several days after the procedure, with slight nausea (feeling sick) and a mild fever.

Your pain-level is likely to be similar to a bad period pain. This can last for up to two weeks following the procedure, and most women are able to control this pain with oral painkillers.

The fever is caused by the necrotic (dying) fibroids and can usually be treated using regular painkillers. If you experience recurrent or swinging fever, please attend your closest emergency (A&E) department, as this implies more serious infection and you may need to be admitted for monitoring, antibiotics and further investigations. A small number of patients (around 10%) will expel the dead fibroid tissue vaginally. This can look like very small pieces of chicken meat.

Whilst this should not be cause for concern, it can cause cramping abdominal pains for up to 12 months following embolisation. If you experience this, please see your GP, who may prescribe oral antibiotics and painkillers.

Rarely, large fibroid masses can obstruct the cervix (neck of the womb) and cause infection with symptoms of pain, fever and an offensive-smelling vaginal discharge. If you notice any of these symptoms, please go to A&E and ask for the on-call gynaecologist, explaining that you have undergone UFE.

You may also develop a vaginal discharge that can be brown, bloody, yellow or mucus-like. This is the breakdown product of the fibroids. This discharge usually lasts for about two weeks, but it can last longer. If it is severe or foul-smelling, please contact your gynaecologist, GP or local A&E department.

It is likely that you will feel drained and tired for one to two weeks after UFE. We advise that you rest for at least two to three weeks, depending on your recovery rate. Once you feel ready to do so, you can resume your usual activities.

To give the puncture sites in your groin time to heal, do not drive or do any form of strenuous exercise for at least 48 hours after the procedure. Once you are at home, you should check the puncture sites regularly. Bruising at the puncture sites is normal, whilst bleeding and/or swelling is very rare. If you experience any bleeding or swelling, lie down and apply pressure directly on the site for 10 minutes. If the bleeding or swelling continues after 10 minutes, please go to your nearest A&E, taking this information sheet with you.

When can I go back to work?

We usually recommend two to three weeks off work but this depends on what your work is, how flexible your work can be and how you feel. Before you leave the hospital you will be given a sick note to cover the first three weeks. If you need extra time off work, please speak to your GP.

When can I resume sexual intimacy?

You can resume sexual activity whenever you feel ready. However, it is recommended you use condoms to prevent any infection or pregnancy. We strongly advise you to avoid pregnancy for at least six months after treatment.

Will I have a follow-up appointment?

You will have a follow-up appointment with the gynaecology team three months after your procedure. After six months, a post-treatment MRI scan will be arranged for you and you will be reviewed in the IR clinic.

Contact us

- If you need **urgent medical attention**, contact your **GP** or attend **A&E**.
- If you need to contact the **Fibroid team**, please telephone **020 8725 2088** or email louise.jones0@stgeorges.nhs.uk
- If you need to contact the **Interventional radiology team**, please telephone **020 8725 0946**.

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

