

Intermittent Self-Dilatation (ISD) for adults

Introduction

This leaflet is intended to provide you with some basic information about performing Intermittent Self Dilatation (ISD). Please discuss any questions or concerns you may have with your Specialist Nurse.

What is ISD?

Intermittent Self Dilatation (ISD) is a therapy which is used to reduce the risk of urethral strictures (narrowing of the urethra) from happening and the need for repeated operations. Dilatation means 'stretching' and it involves passing a catheter (tube) into the urethra to stop it from narrowing. Your consultant has recommended that ISD would be helpful for you.

The procedure of self-dilatation is carried out by yourself at home and is a safe and simple treatment which will reduce the risk of your stricture recurring. Instructions on how to perform ISD are described later in this leaflet.

The urethra is the tube which urine is passed through from the bladder to the outside of the body (see Figure 1).

A urethral stricture is the name given to a narrowing in the urethra which can develop when the delicate lining of the urinary tract becomes damaged. Damage to the urethra can be caused by infection or as a side effect of the examination and treatment of a urinary problem. As the damaged lining of the urethra heals, scar tissue can form, causing the narrowing (see Figure 2).

The male urethra is approximately 15 to 20cms long. A urethral stricture can occur anywhere along the length of the urethra often causing a restriction in the flow of urine.

You may be due to have or have already had an operation to open the stricture in your urethra (known as urethrotomy). During this operation the stricture is cut so that the narrowing is opened up. Although this relieves the restriction to the flow of urine there is always a risk that the stricture could return.

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Department

Continence
Service

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Patient Information

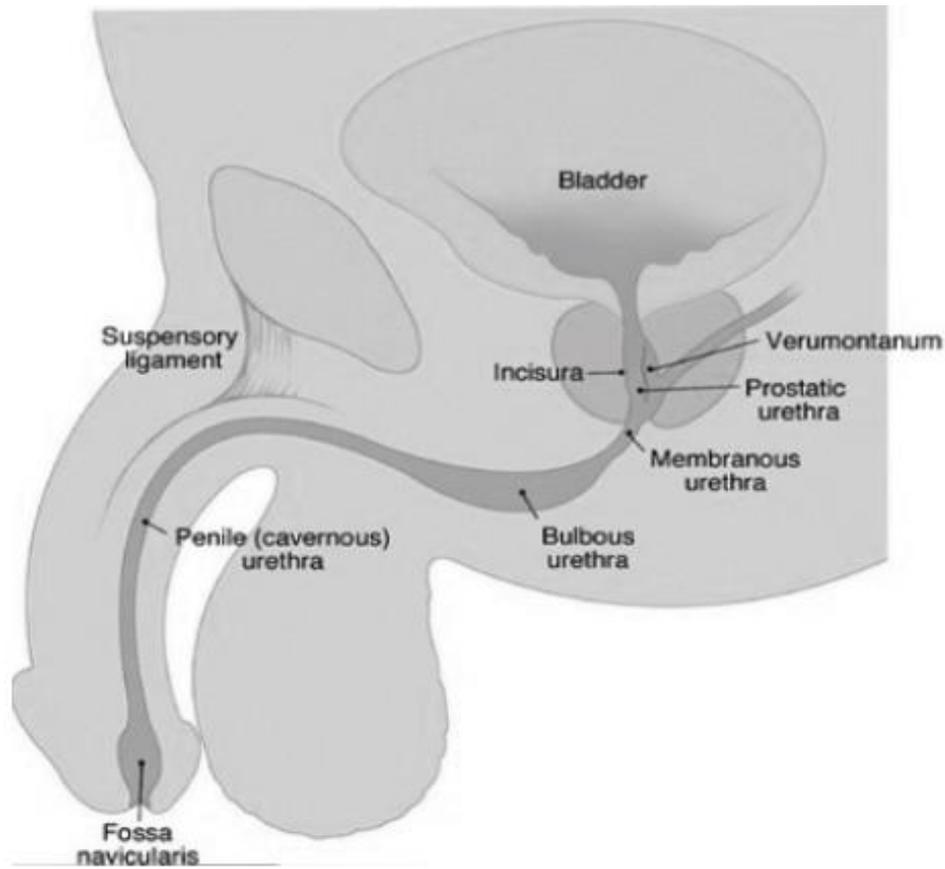


Figure 1: Urethra and bladder

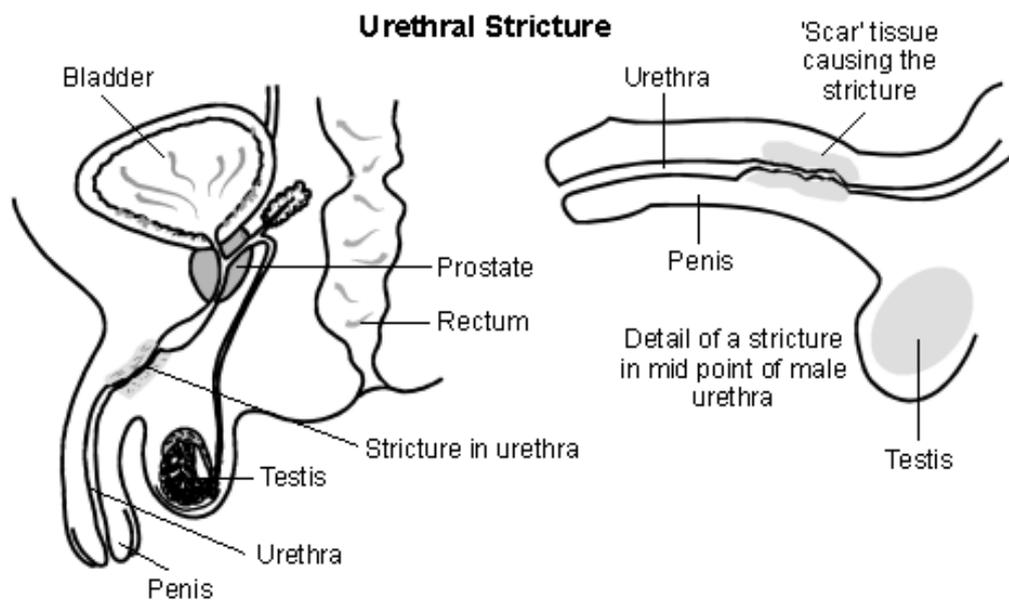


Figure 2: Urethral stricture

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Benefits and complications

The main benefit of performing ISD is that it reduces the risk of your urethral stricture returning and in turn reduces the need for repeated operations. Performing ISD has a very low risk of complications. The most likely complication is infection; however this is usually less than the risk of infection associated with the bladder not emptying itself completely (which often happens when a stricture is present).

Frequently asked questions

Will the procedure be painful?

Some people experience a slight stinging sensation at first and a feeling of wanting to pass water. This is normal and usually wears off after a few days.

What if I develop an infection?

Most people have very few infections. Sometimes you may develop an infection when you first start ISD. This does not mean that you have done anything wrong. Symptoms of a urine infection may include, smelly urine, feeling unwell (hot and feverish) or having blood in the urine. If you suspect that you have an infection please contact your GP.

How long will I need to perform ISD for?

ISD is a long term treatment to reduce the risk of urethral strictures from recurring. If the ISD treatment is stopped then the risk of the stricture returning is increased. Most people continue the treatment for the rest of their lives.

How often will I need to perform ISD?

This will vary depending on where the urethral stricture is and the severity of the stricture. It may be as often as every day or just weekly. Your consultant will decide on how often you will need to perform ISD but this frequency may reduce over time

How will I obtain the catheters?

Your GP will give you a prescription for the catheters. You can then either collect the catheters from your local chemist or there are several companies which offer a free prescription collection and delivery service. This will be discussed with you.

Patient Information

Are there different types of catheter?

The recommended type of catheter is a single use one which has a slippery coating. Different brands have slightly different coatings. Your Specialist Nurse will be able to advise you further.

What if I travel or go on holiday?

Performing ISD should not restrict your travel or holiday choices but you should make sure that you order and take enough catheters for the length of your trip. A GP's letter maybe useful if you are travelling abroad, so as to avoid any difficulties with customs.

Can I still have sex?

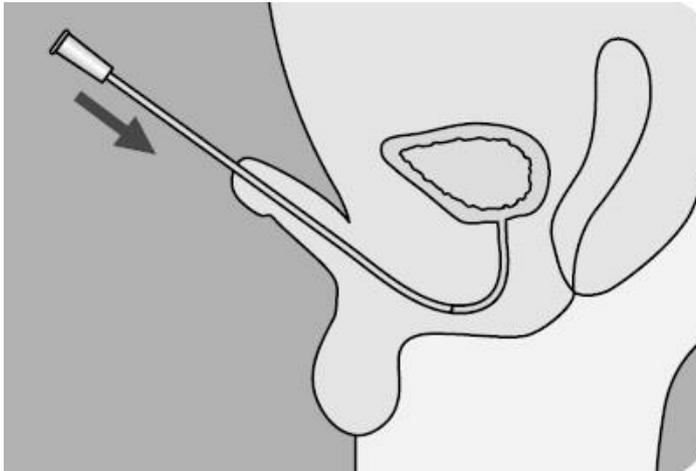
Yes, performing ISD should not affect your sex life.

Instructions for performing ISD

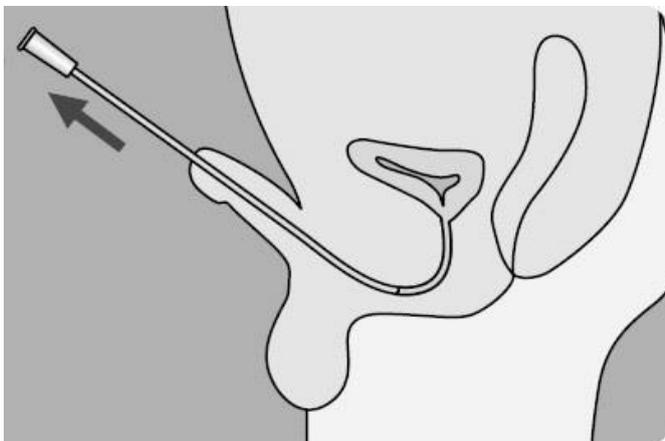
ISD is a clean procedure and normal daily washing of the genitals is enough. Positions for the procedure are an individual choice, you may prefer to stand, lie or sit. You can discuss this further with your Specialist Nurse.

When performing the procedure you may feel a stinging sensation. This is normal and will pass as you become used to the procedure.

1. Wash your hands thoroughly.
2. Prepare the catheter as per the manufacturer's instructions. Place the catheter so that you can reach it easily. Position yourself over the toilet or alternatively have a container in which to collect the urine.
3. Pull back the foreskin (if present) and gently pull the penis into an upright position to make it easier for the catheter to pass through the curve of the urethra (figure 3).

Patient
Information**Figure 3: Catheter insertion**

4. Insert the catheter gently into the urethra (remembering that the urethra is approximately 15 to 20 cms long). You will need to insert the catheter until you have passed through the stricture (your Specialist Nurse will advise you on this). You may feel some resistance as the catheter stretches the stricture, but this should not be painful.
5. If your stricture is at the far end of the urethra, you will need to pass the catheter right into the bladder. As you do this you may feel some resistance as the catheter passes through the prostate. At this point, coughing or passing urine can help. Urine will drain as you enter the bladder.
6. When you are sure you have passed through the stricture you can withdraw the catheter slowly, remembering to gently pull the penis upwards as you slide the catheter out (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Catheter withdrawal**

Patient Information

7. Return the foreskin to the normal position.
8. Dispose of the catheter in a sealed plastic bag and place in the dustbin.
9. Always urinate after completing your dilatation in order to rinse away any foreign bacteria which may have been introduced into the bladder during the procedure.
10. Wash your hands.

Common problems

Blood in urine

A small amount of blood when you first start to catheterise/dilate is normal. This usually improves after the first week. If the blood loss is large you should contact your GP. If this occurs after you have been catheterising for some time take a urine sample to your GP's surgery for testing.

Stinging when you pass urine

You may have a urine infection. Other symptoms of a urine infection include fever, pain when urinating, a frequent desire to urinate, back pain or blood in the urine. Take a urine sample to your GP's surgery for testing.

Stinging sensation when I catheterise/dilate.

This is a common sensation when you first perform ISD. If this continues, it may be worth trying a different brand of catheter. Discuss this with your continence advisor.

Unable to pass the catheter when you have not had a problem previously

Do not worry; sometimes this can happen if the urethra goes into spasm (contraction). Try to relax; a warm bath may be helpful. If you are still unable to perform ISD, contact your Specialist Nurse for advice as the stricture may have reoccurred.

No urine drains out of the catheter (this only applies if you are catheterising into your bladder).

1. You may not have the catheter in the right place
2. You may have a spasm

Patient Information

3. The bladder may be empty.

Try again later, if there is still no drainage, please contact your Specialist Nurse for advice as the stricture may have reoccurred.

I cannot get the catheter out

Try to relax; you are most likely experiencing a spasm. A warm bath can be helpful. If this does not help, please contact your continence advisor or GP. Medication to relax the bladder may be needed to prevent this from happening again.

Your catheter information

Type of catheter/dilator: _____

Size: _____

Order code: _____

Instructions: _____

**Patient
Information**

Contact information

Your Specialist Nurse:

Tel: _____

Your doctor is: _____

Tel: _____

Your district nurse is: _____

Tel: _____

Pharmacy or company: _____

Tel: _____

Contact information

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