Diagnostic Imaging

NHS
Greater Glasgow and Clyde

Information about having a

Inferior Vena Cava Filter

What is an Inferior Vena Cava Filter?

This is the placement of a filter in the inferior vena cava, the large vein in the abdomen that returns blood from the lower part of the body to the heart.

Filters are placed in patients who have a history of, or are at risk of developing blood clots in the legs. The filter traps any large clot fragments and prevents them travelling through the vena cava vein to the heart and lungs. They are used when patients cannot be successfully treated with blood thinners.

Who will do it?

A specially trained doctor called a Radiologist.

Where will it be done?

Usually in a screening room in the x-ray department.

When can I discuss the procedure?

You can discuss this with your referring consultant and also the Radiologist before the procedure.

Consent

We will ask you to sign a consent form before the procedure. Please make sure that you ask any questions you may have. When signing the form you should know what we plan to do, alternative treatments, and any risks or complication of the procedure.

What preparation is required before the procedure?

You cannot eat for 6 hours before the procedure but you may drink small amounts of clear fluid up to 2 hours before the procedure.

You will need to undress and wear a hospital gown. We may shave the skin around the groin area.

What happens during the procedure?

This is a sterile procedure however the technique used may vary but generally you will lie on your back on the x-ray table.

We may give you sedatives or painkillers via a needle in your arm. We will monitor your vital signs (blood pressure, pulse, oxygen intake). You may need oxygen.

We will clean the area over the groin or neck with antiseptic solution and then inject a local anaesthetic.

The radiologist will use the x-ray equipment to guide a fine plastic tube (catheter) into the vein using a needle and guide wire.

When the catheter is in the correct place, the radiologist will monitor the progress by injecting x-ray dye, called contrast medium, through the catheter. The radiologist will insert the filter and further screening will confirm the position. We remove the catheter and will apply pressure to the puncture site to prevent any bleeding.

There may be some slight discomfort when the local anaesthetic is injected. This will not last long.

As the x-ray dye (contrast medium) passes round your body you may feel warm sensation which some people find a little unpleasant. This soon passes and should not concern you.

How long will it take?

This can vary for a number of reasons however expect to be in the x-ray department for about 1 to 2 hours.

What happens afterwards?

You will return to your ward and remain on bed rest for an hour. The nursing staff will monitor you and carry out routine observations (blood pressure, pulse etc). Nursing staff will also monitor the puncture site to make sure there is no bleeding. You may be able to go home on the same day, or you may be kept in overnight.

Are there any risks?

This is a safe procedure but as with any medical treatment some risks and complication can arise.

A small bruise may develop around the puncture site, however if this becomes unusually large and infected you will require antibiotics.

Very rarely some damage can be caused to the vein by the catheter and this may require treatment by surgery.

If you have any questions please telephone the number on your appointment card or letter.