

Patient information

Shock Wave Lithotripsy (SWL)

Urology Department - Royal Liverpool Hospital

Your surgeon has advised you to have shock wave lithotripsy (SWL). This leaflet explains what to expect from the procedure.

What is Shock Wave Lithotripsy (SWL)?

SWL is a non-invasive treatment for breaking up stones in the ureter or kidney, using acoustic vibration waves. The machine used is called a Lithotripter. The sensation of the treatment has been likened to an elastic band 'twanging' on the skin. To treat kidney stones.

What are the benefits of having Shock Wave Lithotripsy (SWL)?

The intended benefit of SWL is to treat kidney stones.

What are the risks of SWL?

Significant, unavoidable or frequently occurring risks:

Common (greater than one in ten)

- Bleeding on passing urine for a short period after the procedure.
- Pain in the kidney as small fragments of stone pass after treatment.
- Need for repeated shockwave lithotripsy treatments.
- Failure to fragment very hard stone(s) requiring an alternative treatment.
- Recurrence of stones

Occasional (between one in ten and one in fifty)

- Bruising or blistering of the skin in the loin or on the front of the abdomen.
- Urinary tract infection due to bacteria released from the stone during fragmentation, requiring antibiotic treatment.
- Stone fragments rarely get stuck in the tube between the kidney and the bladder requiring hospital attendance and, occasionally, surgery to remove the stone fragments.

Rare (less than one in fifty)

- Severe infection requiring intravenous antibiotics and sometimes drainage of the kidney by a small drain placed through the back into the kidney
- Kidney damage (bruising/bleeding) or infection needing further treatment

Alternative Therapies:

- telescopic surgery, keyhole surgery or observation

What will happen if I decide not to have treatment?

This depends on the position and size of your stone. Monitoring only may be an option for small kidney stones. It is better to treat ureteric stones actively as they can block and damage the kidney.

What can I expect about the treatment session?

- Your SWL treatment will be carried out at the Theatre Assessment Unit on the 2nd Floor of the Royal Liverpool Hospital. Our Lithotripsy Co-ordinator will send you an appointment to attend.

Before treatment starts you will be asked to:

- attend the Radiology Department for an X-ray or ultrasound scan
- provide a urine sample.
- A nurse will prepare you for the treatment. This involves asking some questions about your health, checking your blood pressure, temperature and pulse and urine. They will also give you prescribed medicines before the treatment.
- During the treatment, you will lie on a special couch and the Sonographer will locate your stone using X-rays or ultrasound. This helps to focus the power onto the stone.
- The treatment itself tends to take up to approximately 40 minutes, although you will be in the department for longer than this.
- During the treatment, the Lithotripter makes a loud clicking sound when it delivers the vibrations to break the stone. Some patients find distraction from this by listening to music.

After your treatment

A nurse will check your blood pressure, temperature, pulse, and urine. They may also give you prescribed medicines to take home.

Follow up

Depending on the size, location and number of stones you have, you may be offered another appointment to attend for a further lithotripsy session or may be seen by your surgeon in the outpatient clinic.

Are there any contra-indications for the treatment?

There are some conditions that may require some preparation prior to commencing your treatment.

- Uncontrolled high blood pressure will need to be treated by your family doctor (GP).
- If you are taking Anticoagulation therapy (e.g. Warfarin, Aspirin, Clopidogrel) please inform your surgeon who will advise a plan for stopping and restarting your medicines.
- Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm – it is important that you inform your surgeon if you have been diagnosed with this condition.

You need to inform the Lithotripter Unit if:

- You have a pacemaker. This will not prevent you having Lithotripsy. A pacing technician will be arranged to attend for your appointment.
- If you are or think you may be pregnant. Lithotripsy may be postponed or an alternative treatment may be offered as appropriate.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

If you have accessed this patient information leaflet via a QR code, can you please take the time to complete a short questionnaire by clicking [here](#).

Further information

For enquiries about Lithotripsy appointments contact the Lithotripter Co-ordinator.

Tel: 0151 706 6886

Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 6886.

This is also an answerphone to leave messages for the Lithotripter Co-ordinator.

For general queries telephone the Royal Liverpool Urology Department

Tel: 0151 282 6877/6788

Text phone number: 18001 0151 282 6877/6788

Stone Nurse Specialist

Tel: 0151 282 6819

Text phone number: 18001 0151 282 6819

For clinical questions specific to your case, telephone the secretary of your Urology Consultant.

Visit the British association of Urological Surgeons website at www.baus.org.uk/patients

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