

LATERAL SPHINCTEROTOMY

Lateral sphincterotomy is a procedure used in the treatment of anal fissure and normally performed under general anaesthetic.

It involves a small cut being made in the muscles (anal sphincter) around the anal canal (back passage). The procedure is required when other treatments, such as creams and ointments, have failed to heal an anal fissure. It is designed to relieve the pain and spasm associated with the fissure and allows the fissure to heal. The cut may be stitched with dissolvable stitches or it may be left open to heal naturally.

What are the possible risks of lateral sphincterotomy?

General risks associated with any surgery include:

Infection

This is a risk with any surgery and it is important that the area is kept as clean as possible. Shower or bath twice a day when possible, as well as washing after the bowels have been opened. The use of a bidet, shower, or bath at this time is recommended. You should remember to wipe from the front to the back to avoid contamination with faecal matter. If the area becomes red, swollen, and sore or you feel unwell or have a high temperature, you may need some antibiotics and you should speak to your GP.

Pain

You will require regular analgesia (painkillers) after your operation for several days. You should avoid analgesia containing codeine as this can cause constipation. You will probably need analgesia when you have your bowels open over the first few days as this can be sore. You may need to use a laxative to keep the stools soft and, therefore, less painful to pass. Simple paracetamol and anti-inflammatory tablets should be sufficient to control the pain. If you feel that your pain is not controlled with painkillers, you should speak to your GP. Increasing pain can be a sign of other problems, such as infection and should be discussed with your GP.

Bleeding

Some bleeding is to be expected after surgery and you will need to protect your clothing from staining. A dressing pad or sanitary towel can be used. If the bleeding is heavy and increasing, you should talk to your GP. It is likely that you will see some blood on opening your bowels. This is normal but should begin to reduce after seven to ten days

Specific complication for lateral sphincterotomy

Incontinence

A small number of people who undergo this operation may find that they are unable to control the passage of wind from the anus. Sometimes they may also be unable to control the bowel and leakage or incontinence of faeces can occur. This can be mild and temporary. However, in some cases it may need further surgery to correct it. If this occurs, you should contact your GP for advice.

You may find that you have a minor mucus discharge (slime) from your anus for some time after your operation and there may be a need to wear a pad to protect your clothing. This will resolve over the next few weeks. If you are concerned, you should talk to your GP.

You should return to your normal activities within a few days of your operation and should be able to return to work when you are comfortable.

Any personal pre existing conditions may further increase the risk of surgery, these will be discussed with you at the time your consent is taken to proceed with surgery. Please ask any questions or discuss any concerns at this time.

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