

IL68

Patient Information - Biofeedback Clinic

Introduction

You have been referred by your consultant for a course of biofeedback (bowel retraining) with the nurse specialist. Following your recent tests your consultant has suggested that you may benefit from biofeedback for your bowel symptoms. This leaflet is intended to answer some of the questions you may have about your forthcoming biofeedback appointment.

What is biofeedback?

Biofeedback is a technique used for selected patients suffering from either faecal incontinence (involuntary leakage of solid/liquid stool or wind) or constipation.

Biofeedback involves either retraining muscles to relax or strengthening muscle tone in your back passage depending upon your symptoms.

The training of muscles can take some time and a biofeedback programme usually lasts an average of 6 months. It also aims to improve your quality of life.

Why do I need this training?

The muscles in the back passage can become weak because of damage during childbirth or surgery or just through age. The muscles can also lose the ability to relax effectively.

Tests you have had previously have shown some weakness or lack of co-ordination of the muscles in your back passage.

Biofeedback is a relatively simple, non-painful course of training and exercise, to try and give some strength or coordination back to these muscles.

What are the risks, benefits and alternatives?

- Biofeedback is safe and has no known side effects.
- In some patients insertion of the probe into the back passage may cause slight discomfort, but should not be painful.
- Results from the programme are largely dependant upon your commitment and effort with the exercises you will be given to do at home.
- A small proportion of patients do not find any benefit from it.
- In many patients biofeedback is an alternative to surgery.

What does biofeedback involve?

Following initial assessment with the nurse specialist you will be asked to remove your underclothing and lie on your left hand side on a couch. Your privacy and dignity will be maintained at all times throughout your appointment. You will not be put to sleep or given any sedation.

Biofeedback involves inserting a small probe into your back passage with your consent. The probe is connected to a computer or machine. You will be asked to squeeze and relax your back passage at certain times and you will be able to see your progress on a screen.

The probe will usually be in place for a few minutes during your first appointment so that the nurse specialist can assess the muscles in your back passage.

During your follow up appointments the probe will usually be in place for 5-10 minutes. This allows both you and the nurse specialist to check the effect of the

exercises you will have practised at home on the muscles in your back passage.

Do I need to do anything before my appointment?

- There is no special preparation for this appointment.
- You can eat and drink normally before your appointment.
- You do not need to have opened your bowels on the day of the appointment.
- You will not need to take any medication to clear your bowel before your appointment e.g. an enema or suppositories.

What should I expect at my first appointment?

- At your first appointment you will meet the nurse specialist who will go through your previous test results.
- The nurse specialist will ask you about your general health including medication, diet and bowel symptoms.
- The nurse specialist will assess the muscles in your back passage using the biofeedback machine.
- From this initial assessment the nurse specialist will discuss your individual treatment programme with you.
- Your programme can consist of exercises, diet and lifestyle changes.
- You will be given written information about exercises to do at home.
- This appointment will last approximately one hour.

Follow up appointments

The biofeedback programme will include several visits usually over a six month period. This can vary from patient to patient. Follow up appointments will last approximately 30-40 minutes.

In order to obtain the best results you need to follow the agreed programme. We can give you the information, exercises and advice but only you can make the difference. The exercise programme is hard work and once learned should become part of your daily life.

Will I be able to go back to work?

Yes. After your appointment you will be able to continue your day as normal.

What happens at the end of treatment?

The nurse specialist will inform both your consultant and GP of the results of your biofeedback programme. Your consultant will arrange an appointment to see you again in their clinic if necessary.

Where can I find the biofeedback clinic?

- Located within the endoscopy unit at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.
- You need to report to the endoscopy unit reception on arrival.
- The clinic is held on a Wednesday between 1.30 pm – 4.30 pm.

What happens if I have any problems?

If you have any questions either before or after your appointment you can contact the nurse specialist Monday to Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm.

Colorectal Nurse Specialist

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

Sheriff Hill

Gateshead

Tyne and Wear

NE9 6SX

Tel: 0191 4453150 or 0191 4820000 Bleep 2041

Outside office hours you may leave a message on the answer phone Tel: 0191 4453151 and your call will be returned by the next working day.

This information leaflet is available in larger print if you have a visual impairment. Please use the contact numbers above to request this leaflet.

Further information

The Continence Foundation

307 Hatton Square, 16 Baldwins Gardens

London EC1N 7RJ

Tel: 020 7404 6875

Email: continence-help@dial.pipex.com

Website: www.continence-foundation.org.uk

Patient information developed in conjunction with biofeedback services at City Hospitals Sunderland, Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Trust and County Durham and Darlington Acute Hospitals NHS Trust.

Information Leaflet:	No 68
Version:	1
Title:	Biofeedback Clinic
First Published:	April 2007
Review Date:	April 2009
Author:	Claire Egglestone, Colorectal CNS

This leaflet can be made available in other languages and formats upon request