

Catheter Test

What is a catheter test?

The catheter test is a common procedure. It gives your doctor the opportunity to perfect the technique needed to do your actual transfer in cases where it is suspected to be difficult.

Why is a catheter test done?

Having a catheter test is a lot like having an embryo transfer. During embryo transfer we use a very soft catheter which contains your embryo and is performed as gently as possible. A difficult embryo transfer has been associated with lower pregnancy success rates. In cases where we think that difficulty might be anticipated during the actual embryo transfer in view of your history we may recommend you to have a catheter test beforehand.

What does the catheter test involve?

The catheter test is usually done before starting the IVF cycle. You will probably be told to come that day with a full bladder. This is because your full bladder pushes the uterus into a position which makes the procedure easier. A speculum will be used to help your clinical practitioner visualize the neck of your womb (cervix), more like having a smear test, and place the catheter into and through the cervix into your uterus.

You may feel cramping or a sharp but tolerable pain when the catheter is placed. Some women only feel slight discomfort like during a pap smear, and nothing more.

What is the aim of the procedure?

The aim of the procedure is to choose the best catheter to use with your particular anatomy, to make sure there is nothing to prevent the catheter from entering the cervix smoothly and figure out the best path from your cervix into your uterus, this may vary according to the position of the uterus.

How do I know that I might need a catheter test?

If you had any previous surgeries to your cervix, uterine abnormalities, cervical fibroids, or any other factor that can make the passage through your cervix into the uterine cavity difficult.

Do I need anaesthetic?

No, the procedure is performed whilst you are awake. The procedure should be as gentle as possible and painless similar to Embryo transfer. However, you may experience some discomfort especially if the passage through the cervix is difficult which may lead your doctor to offer you a further procedure.

Are there any risks?

It is generally considered a very safe procedure. There is a very rare chance of developing an infection. If you develop a fever within a few days of the procedure, experience severe cramping, or unusual bleeding (not just spotting), or offensive vaginal discharge, or If you are concerned at any time, please contact the Hewitt Centre for further advice. There is also a small chance that the procedure gets abandoned due to difficult entry, hence a subsequent procedure would then be required.

How much does it cost?

Currently if your treatment is funded by the NHS, you may be eligible to have the procedure performed without cost. However, if you are paying for your treatment an additional will be incurred.

This leaflet can be made available in different formats on request. If you would like to make any suggestions or comments about the content of this leaflet, then please contact the Patient Experience Team on 0151 702 4353 or by email at pals@lwh.nhs.uk

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