

**Guide to having a**

**Tension Free Vaginal Tape Procedure**

**(TVT or TVT-O or TVT-Secure)**

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## **Introduction**

There are many different operations described for stress incontinence. The TVT or TVT-O operation involves placing a synthetic mesh tape under the urethra to give your urethra and bladder base support when you normally would leak. Over a million TVT tapes have been inserted over the past 10 years with a very low complication rate. In most cases a Tension Free Vaginal Tape Procedure (TVT) should give a good cure in about 85% of cases, either as a day case or with an overnight hospital stay, and only a short time off work ( 2-3 weeks).

## **What is the success rate of the TVT procedure?**

I have performed over 300 of these procedures since 1998, and around 85% of women report a complete cure with another 12% noticing a major improvement. No operation can guarantee a 100% permanent cure but only around 2-3% of women consider the TVT to have been a failure when questioned at 6 months. Studies from Sweden suggest that it is still effective in 85% of cases after 5 years which is comparable with other more complex operations.

The procedure has recently been evaluated by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) and is recommended by them as first line surgical treatment if conservative therapy with pelvic floor rehabilitation has failed.

## **What does the operation involve?**

A TVT is usually carried out under a short general anaesthetic or a spinal anaesthetic if you prefer this. The procedure takes about 15-20 minutes and pain after the procedure is usually mild, and easily controlled with painkillers.

The procedure involves a small vaginal incision and 2 small incisions are made in the skin of the abdomen or your thighs depending on whether we place a TVT or TVT-O tape. There is also a new tape called a TVT –Secure which has no exit wound and only requires a single 2cm vaginal incision. A special instrument is then used to pass the tape into position and we then check the bladder with a telescope. The tape is made of a special form of nylon woven mesh called prolene. Prolene is a synthetic substance and has been implanted into millions of humans for a variety of conditions such as hernia repair. Once placed in the body in the correct position, the high density plastic cover is removed and the tape then acts rather like “velcro”. No stitches are needed to hold the tape in position. All the stitches will dissolve in 10-14 days. The whole operation takes 20- 30 minutes. I usually leave a catheter in the bladder and may leave a pack in the vagina until the 1<sup>st</sup> post-operative day. If you have a day case operation you will have a catheter for a few hours. You should be able to pass urine (and not leak) almost immediately, and can go home the following day.

## **What are the risks /complications?**

Urinary Tract Infection	2.6-6.2%
Wound infection	0.7-1.2%
Urge symptoms	0-3.8%
Bladder perforation	0.7-9.0%
Defective healing	8 cases
Urethral erosion	5 cases
Haematoma	0.7-1.5%
Bleeding (minor)	0-3.2%
Bleeding (major)	15 cases (0.01%)
Bowel perforation	7 cases (0.005%)

(complications reported to Manufacturer after 160 000 cases of TVT, Source Ethicon, Gynecare UK)

As you can see risks are low and problems after the TVT-obturator seem to be even less common than the older TVT. The most common problem after a TVT-O procedure is some pain over the inner aspect of the thighs. This will go away in most women by the 12 weeks after surgery. About 5% of patients can have some difficulty with bladder emptying after surgery, but this settles quickly on its own.

## **What is the likely recovery period?**

You will be up and about within a few hours of surgery. I advise that when you get home you should avoid heavy lifting or straining for about 6 weeks, and should be fit to return to work after 3-4 weeks depending on your job. You should avoid intercourse for around 6 weeks to allow the vagina to heal properly and should be completely back to normal around 6 weeks. You can drive after 7-10 days.

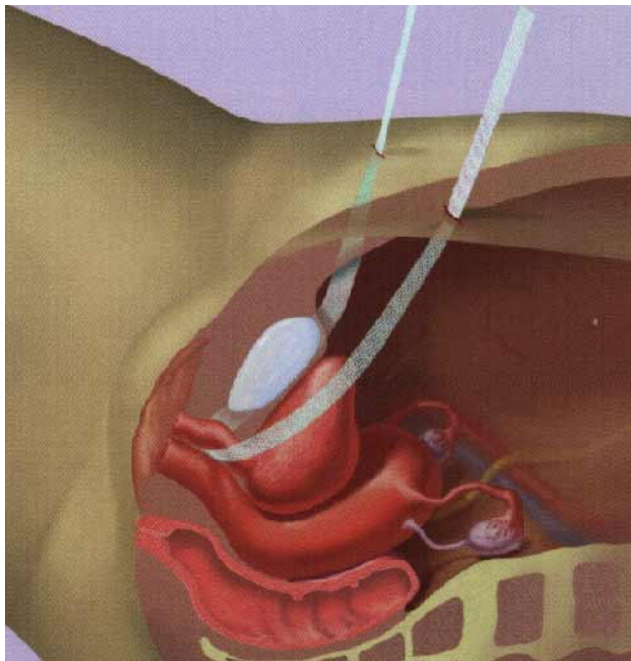
While the stitches are dissolving you may notice some discharge, blood spotting or even small pieces of stitch material coming away. This is normal and you shouldn't worry. We will meet for a follow-up visit at around 6 weeks and if all is well discharge you.

## **What do I do if I have problems?**

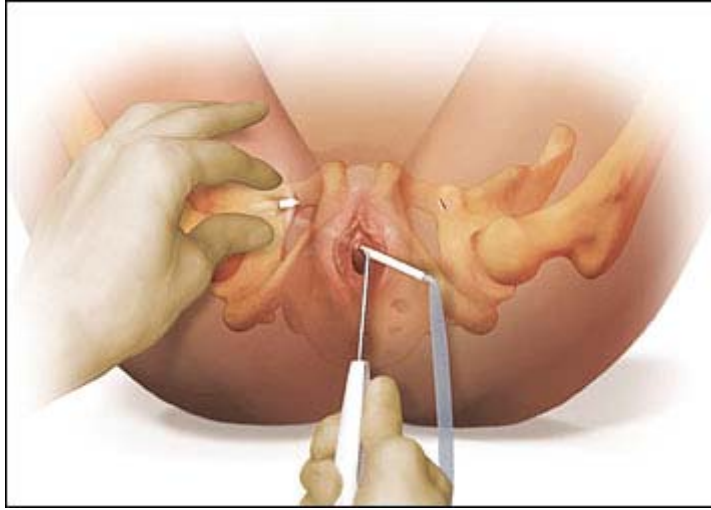
After discharge from hospital you can contact us at any time if you have any problems or concerns.

**Please call Pinehill Hospital 01462- 422822 and ask to speak to a nurse**

**Or call my secretary in office hours on 01462 456788**



**Diagram of standard TVT operation showing position of the tape**



**Diagram of the TVT-obturator (TVT-O)**