

Bryony's Patient perspective leaflet – Labioplasty

This leaflet has been provided to give you some information about gender reassignment surgery (cosmetic) from a patient's personal perspective. Please note that not every patient's experience is the same and the timings of some aspects of your stay may differ from those detailed here.

Bryony's patient perspective

I came to Charing Cross Hospital in May 2004. My choice of surgery was the Labioplasty (cosmetic). I hope this booklet will give you some idea of what to expect and help guide you through this type of surgery.

Things to do before your admission to hospital

Make sure that any pets you have are being cared for whilst you are away and also for the first few weeks that you are home.

Arrange for someone to do your shopping for you, or sign up for internet shopping / home delivery with a supermarket.

Make sure you have plenty of books and magazines to read while you are in hospital (and also for when you are recovering at home). Also, stock up on videos / DVDs to watch at home when resting.

Things to buy for use at home after your operation

Panty liners, Wet Ones' or baby wipes

What to bring into hospital

Personal stereo and headphones (plus tapes or CDs)

Books, magazines, etc.

Nightclothes, dressing gown and slippers.

Loose-fitting clothes for going home in.

Wash kit and towel.

Tissues

Panty liners

Cash – for phone cards, newspapers and other small bits you may require.

Day 1 – Arrival

This for me was a Tuesday, although you may come in on a Saturday. You will need to book in at Admissions on the ground floor and find out which ward to go to. When I arrived on the ward (which in my case, was 7 North), I was greeted with warmth and kindness from the nursing staff. You will be taken to your bay on the ward, shown your bed and may be introduced to any other GRS patients on the ward. (Private patients would be admitted on Thursday afternoon for operation the same evening).

You can unpack your things whilst you wait for the nursing staff to admit you to the ward. The nurses will routinely take your temperature, blood and record your blood

pressure. After this, I was allowed to eat and drink, as well as wander off the ward to find my bearings, as long as I told the nursing staff where I was going.

Day 2

This is a boring day. You can still eat and drink until midnight, but after that, you will be on fluids only until 2 hours before your operation. That was a relief for me, as all I could do was smell toast, which made my stomach rumble for food.

The Consultant came to see me with The Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) and we went through some final questions before I signed my consent forms. After this, I was left to my own devices. I passed the time by reading and doing puzzle books. You may also like to have a wander around the hospital and find the nice gift shop and hospital shop on the ground floor, as well as the lovely coffee shop on the first floor and the WRVS shop. Iffy the CNS came back later and had another chat to make sure I understood what was going to happen the next day. She also told me about the huge dressing I would have in place afterwards, along with my other accessories (wound drain and urinary catheter).

Day 3 – Surgery day

For me, this was a Thursday. I had been starved of food since midnight, but I was allowed to continue to drink fluids until 10.00am, as my surgery was scheduled for the afternoon.

As the other patients all had their breakfast, I showered and shaved ready for surgery. I was also given an enema to help me empty my bowels. The CNS called in to see me. I was now the proud owner of pair of TED stockings – very chic! Changed into a gown for theatre and also ordered my meals for tomorrow. The anaesthetist also came to discuss the anaesthetic with me.

In the afternoon, the porters collected me and took me up to theatre – nervous and anxious, but ready. Woke up in the recovery room, felt tired and thirsty and was aware of that tight bandage I has warned about. I was drifting in and out of sleep. Once back on the ward, I remember the nurse continually taking my observations (blood pressure, pulse, temperature), but was quite happy drifting in and out of sleep. The CNS popped in to see how I was feeling, but I really do not recall very much.

Day 4 (the day after the operation)

The CNS called in early to say all went well and that I could eat if I wanted and that she would return later with the Consultant to reduce the dressing. She asked if she could take some photographs for teaching purposes, I readily agreed and so she took some before the dressing came off. I was worried and anxious as there was some blood on the dressings, but iffy explained that this was common and not serious. After this, I sat up and after my breakfast, I passed the morning by doing puzzles and reading.

The Consultant and CNS appeared later in the morning – what a relief to have the bandage down! she took a few more photographs – amazing. It was swollen and bruised, but on the whole I was very happy.

The nursing staff then took my wound drain out, which stung quite a bit, but they got rid of that bulky dressing for a 'lovely' pair of net knickers and a smaller pad. Today was a lazy day and I just read and slept. The CNS popped back late afternoon to see if everything was settling, which it was. I was so pleased.

Day 5

Now eating, drinking and gently mobilising (moving around). My catheter bag has been changed to a leg bag, so it makes it easier for me to get around. Amazed that I am in so little pain. Nursing staff checked my wounds and changed the pad for me. As I was on a 5 day ward, I was moved to a different ward, but not a problem – the staff were friendly and helpful and soon had me feeling at ease.

Day 6 and 7

Continuing to mobilise. I can do my own thing really – go walkabout, read, sleep and am amazed I have no pain. (If you do go off the ward, remember to tell staff first).

Day 8 and 9

Today I had my catheter removed. This was okay and I actually managed to pass urine with no problems. The CNS came to see me to talk through the process for discharge home, how to take my painkillers and to see if I needed sick certificates for work. She also took a few more photographs, before showing me the ones from a few days before. Incredible – things were settling, but still have a lot more healing to do. Had the opportunity to ask questions before I was allowed to go home.

Once Home

Remember to bath or shower daily and keep the wounds clean. Pat them dry. Change your panty liners as required.

Do not be in a rush to do things take it easy.

It is reassuring to know that Iffy will call you in a few days, but that you can call her if you need to.

Please do not expect miracles. Things do take time to heal and for the swelling to go down. Now you are at home, it is tiring having to do most of the things for yourself that you had done for you in hospital, so just take your time.

Acknowledgements

I hope this leaflet has given you some idea of what to expect following your Labioplasty.

I would like to say a big 'thank you' to all the staff who looked after me on 7 North and 8 South and also to my Consultant and Iffy, the CNS when I was in hospital for their time and care and for giving me the chance to help others with this leaflet.