Extracorporeal shock wave lithotripsy (ESWL)

What is extracorporeal shock wave lithotripsy (ESWL)?
Lithotripsy is the breaking of kidney stones by pressure waves, these waves are focused onto the kidney stone with the use of ultrasound and X-ray. The pressure waves travel through the body tissues without damaging them and reduce the kidney stone to a fine gravel which may be passed naturally in urine over time, usually with no pain. Lithotripsy is usually delivered over 3 treatments each lasting approximately 45 minutes over a period of weeks or until the kidney stone is broken down so it can be passed naturally.

About the procedure
After reporting to the reception area, the nurse will escort you to the patients' area. A simple checklist will be completed and you will be asked to sign a consent form. Any further questions you may have will be answered.

You may be sent for an abdominal X-ray prior to treatment. After changing into a hospital gown, you will be given some pre-medication (this is likely to be in the form of a pain-relieving suppository). You will then be escorted into the treatment area where you will meet the Senior Radiographer, who will position you on the table. This may be on your front, back or side, depending on the position of the stone. Gel or water will be applied to your skin and care will be taken to ensure that you are comfortable.

From this point, it is important to keep still and breathe gently. The radiographer will localise and scan to precisely focus upon the stone which will take a few minutes before treatment begins. Each pressure wave is accompanied by a 'clicking' sound and the sensation is often described as though you are being flicked on the skin with an elastic band.

Preparing for your lithotripsy procedure
If you have a morning appointment, we advise that you eat a light breakfast - no more than tea/coffee and toast for breakfast. If you have an afternoon appointment, have a light snack no later than 11am. Please take any medication as normal unless asked otherwise and bring these to the hospital if you will need to take them whilst you are here. Do not drive or take public transport. It is advised that you arrange for a responsible person to bring you in and take you home. Please do not bring any valuables with you.

Note: If you are over 135kg / 21 stone, are, or think you may be pregnant, take Warfarin, Heparin, Plavix or any other blood-thinning drugs, have a urine infection or are diabetic, please let us know before your treatment day.

What to expect afterwards
After treatment you may experience slight bruising over the treatment area. This is normal and is nothing to be concerned about. It is also normal to see some blood in your urine for a couple of days after your treatment. Please continue to drink plenty of fluids and this will pass.
If you experience any discomfort, please take pain relief as prescribed. Do not take Aspirin unless specifically instructed. If you experience a fever, are shivering or feel unwell, please contact your G.P or referring urologist immediately. It is sometimes necessary with larger stones for you to undergo further treatment.

**Advice following your treatment**

It is essential that you drink plenty of fluids. We advise at least 2 litres (3.5 pints) per day until your follow-up clinic appointment. It is advisable that you rest for the day following treatment, after which if you feel well, you may return to normal activities and to work. After the first couple of days following your treatment, it is important for you to keep as active as you can as this will aid the passage of the fine stone fragments. You may notice some small particles of stone fragments in your urine, but in many cases the fragments are very difficult to see.

**How to find us**

![Map of Bupa Cromwell Hospital](image)

**Contact**

If you have any questions or need further information, please contact the London Lithotripter Centre at Bupa Cromwell Hospital:

Tel: +44 020 7244 4860
Fax: +44 020 7835 2402
Email: lithotripsy@cromwellhospital.com

Bupa Cromwell Hospital
162 – 174 Cromwell Road
London SW5 0TU
+44(0)20 7460 2000 (hospital switchboard)
info@cromwellhospital.com
bupacromwellhospital.com

Published: May 2017
To be reviewed: May 2019

This lithotripsy service is a collaboration between IMPACT MEDICAL and Bupa Cromwell Hospital. The information is published by Bupa Cromwell Hospital and is based on reputable sources of medical evidence and experience from over 30 years of treating patients. It has been peer reviewed by Bupa Cromwell Hospital doctors. The content is intended for general information only and does not replace the need for personal advice from a qualified health professional. If you have any feedback on the content of this patient information document please email info@cromwellhospital.com or telephone 020 7460 5901.