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FACTSHEET

SHOCK WAVE LITHOTRIPSY

About the Procedure:

Many stones in the kidney or ureter (tube between the kidney and bladder) can be treated with a non-invasive treatment known as shock wave lithotripsy or SWL. This procedure uses high energy shock waves to break up urinary stones into sand like particles. During the treatment, shock waves are focused precisely on the stone. Up to 3,000 shock waves are administered to the stone causing it to disintegrate. These smaller fragments of stone can then be passed in your urine with little discomfort. The procedure is performed under sedation administered by your anesthesiologist and takes approximately thirty minutes. Unlike other treatments, no incisions or catheters are required. Patients are usually able to return to the comfort of their own home within an hour or two following the procedure.

Preparing for the Procedure:

If your doctor has recommended SWL for your stone then there are a few things you should know. Your doctor's office will provide you with information regarding the date, time and location of your treatment. You will be required to have a preoperative history and physical as well as laboratory work completed several days prior to your procedure. You will be asked to bring all of your x-rays and CT scans with you including your most recent KUB x-ray. You will not be allowed to eat or drink anything after midnight the night before your procedure. Check with your doctor about taking heart medicines or medications for diabetes or high blood pressure on the morning of the procedure. You may be instructed to take these medicines with a small sip of water. If you are taking any aspirin, arthritis medications, Coumadin, Plavix or blood thinners, please inform your doctor. These medications will generally need to be discontinued seven days before the procedure. If you are unsure about which medications may cause bleeding, ask your doctor.

Your doctor will use a real time x-ray called fluoroscopy to precisely locate your stone during the treatment. For this reason it is important to follow a few simple procedures to minimize the amount of gas or stool in the bowel which might make visualization of your stone more difficult. Take only clear liquids on the day prior to the procedure. Acceptable liquids are tea or coffee (no milk or cream), water, apple juice, Gatorade or other sports drinks, popsicles, italian ice or chicken broth. Do not drink carbonated beverages such as sodas or sparkling water on the day before your procedure. Do not chew gum or eat hard candy the day prior to your treatment.

Drink five ounces of citrate of magnesium at 4:00 pm the day before the procedure. If this does not produce a bowel movement by 7:00 pm take an additional 2 ounces of citrate of magnesium. This is available over the counter in the laxative section of your pharmacy.

If you are taking any aspirin, arthritis medications, Coumadin, Plavix or blood thinners, please inform your doctor. These medications will generally need to be discontinued seven days before the procedure. If you are unsure about which medications may cause bleeding, ask your doctor.

After the Procedure:

The recovery period following SWL is usually only a few days. The small stone particles are passed from your body in the urine over the next several days or weeks. You should drink plenty of liquids, especially water in the days and weeks following the procedure. You will be asked to strain your urine following the procedure and bring the small pieces of gravel to your doctor for analysis. You may experience some discomfort when passing larger fragments. You will be provided with a prescription for pain medicine to take if you need it. In the unlikely event you experience more severe pain or a fever you should call your doctor at once. You will typically have another x-ray several weeks later and you will need to bring this x-ray and the preoperative x-rays to your doctor's office to be sure the stone has completely cleared.