

## TIPS – For Patients

### **What is TIPS?**

TIPS is a medical procedure that helps correct a blood flow problem in the liver caused by portal hypertension, a condition common to certain liver diseases. TIPS is not a surgery but rather performed in the radiology department by an interventional radiologist.

### **Why do I need TIPS?**

TIPS can often help with portal hypertension (which is high blood pressure in the portal vein), a condition which occurs when blood flow in the liver is slowed or stopped by scarring or other damage or increased pressure to the liver.

Several things can happen when blood flow to the liver is blocked. Sometimes bleeding occurs when the blood tries to find unblocked pathways. Sometimes fluid accumulates in the abdomen called ascites and or in the chest called pleural fluid. Any of these can become problematic and not respond to first-line and or conservative measures such as medications. TIPS can be an additional therapy option that may significantly improve portal hypertension and your symptoms.

### **Will I be put to sleep (under anesthesia) during the procedure?**

Yes. You will be placed under general anesthesia (put to sleep) or heavy sedation for the procedure depending on the anesthesiologist's assessment.

### **What will I expect during the procedure?**

Once you are sedated, the radiologist will then perform the procedure from an IV tube in the neck. When the IV tube is removed, stitches are not necessary. There will be a small (less than one inch) incision at your neck. You may replace the band-aid over the incision daily until healed.

During the procedure, the interventional radiologist will make a tunnel in the liver which acts as a shunt through which the blocked blood can now flow. After the tunnel is made, a small metal tube called a stent will be inserted permanently into the tunnel to keep it open.

### **What will I expect after the procedure?**

Once you have recovered, you will be able to eat. Generally there is about 4 hours of bed rest after the procedure. The neck and stomach may be sore. The neck may bruise or have some swelling. These symptoms will go away in a week or less and generally require no treatment.

### **How often will I have to have checkups after the procedure?**

Your TIPS will require periodic checkups to make sure the TIPS is working well for you. This is usually done at 3 to 6 month intervals by your referring doctor. Your referring doctor will tell you the exact schedule you should follow. Keep your doctor informed if any of your symptoms should return after the TIPS is placed.

## **What are the risk of having TIPS done?**

The risks of TIPS include bleeding (1-2% of a serious bleed), temporary confusion/disorientation (about 5-10%), infection/blood stream infection, failure of TIPS, contrast toxicity to the kidney/kidney dysfunction, and allergic reaction to medication/contrast.

## **What are the alternatives to having TIPS done?**

Alternatives to TIPS include surgical shunt placement.

## **What are the benefits of having TIPS done?**

The benefit of your TIPS is that your symptoms can be relieved without surgery, and the recovery time is less than it would be after surgery.

## **What are the instructions after having the procedure?**

- If this a new TIPS, you will need to stay in the hospital overnight for observation. If this is a TIPS revision, an adult family member or friend must drive you home if you are discharged today.
- We strongly recommend that you limit yourself to light and easy activities for a few days after the procedure. Do not strain or lift heavy objects (over 8 pounds)for first 3 days. As you increase your activity, do not bump the incision site at your neck.
- You can change your bandage on your incision site to a band aide on the following morning or within next 2 to 3 days if the initial dressing stays clean and dry. Change every other day or as needed until the site is heal. Keep the site dry as possible until healed.
- There may be a lump or bruise at the incision site. The bruise may spread over a few days. If the lump gets bigger, call your physician immediately. If you see fresh bleeding or any bright red blood from the incision site, you should apply enough pressure to stop the bleed at the incision area for 20 minutes. If the bleeding stops and if there is no swelling or increased neck pain, then observe the site. Let your physician know by the next day. If any symptoms persist, call your doctor immediately for further recommendations, or, when in doubt, call 911 while you continue to hold pressure at the incision area.
- Resume your medications as prescribed by your physician. If you have been given any new prescriptions, fill them immediately and begin taking as directed. Any diabetic patients taking Metformin-containing products will receive special instructions after the TIPS. These drugs should NOT be resumed for the first 48 hours after the TIPS or TIPS revision is completed.
- Resume your previous healthy liver diet. Continue seeing your doctor(s), including the doctor who referred you to us. Your referring doctor will follow-up on you and monitor your progress. Your doctor will reach us if we are needed again.

## **If I have other questions, who do I contact?**

For further questions or concerns about TIPS, please contact Interventional Radiology at 205-934-0152, 205-934-7245, 205-975-4850.