Patient information factsheet

Loop diathermy of the cervix (LLETZ)

Your recent cervical screening (smear test) has suggested that we may need to remove some abnormal cells on your cervix. The doctor has referred you for a loop diathermy of the cervix (removing a small piece of the cervix for testing in the laboratory).

This is nothing to worry about and any abnormalities can be easily treated at your appointment. The procedure is sometimes known as LLETZ (large loop excision of the transformation zone).

Your loop diathermy appointment
We will invite you to come in for an appointment with a colposcopist (a doctor or nurse who specialises in treating the cervix). If the appointment you are given is immediately before an important event (such as an exam, a social occasion or a holiday), please call us on telephone: 023 8120 6034 to reschedule it.

Please contact us before your appointment on telephone: 023 8120 6034 if:
- you have a coil fitted
- you are pregnant
- you have any bleeding or clotting disorders
- you need antibiotic cover for dental procedures
- you have mobility problems
- you need an interpreter

At the appointment, you will be asked to undress from the waist down and lie on a couch, just as you did at your cervical screening. We will give you a local anaesthetic (an injection in the cervix to numb the area).

The colposcopist will use a loop-shaped tool to carefully remove a small piece of cervix. This sample will then be sent to the laboratory for testing. The procedure should take about 20 minutes and you will be advised to rest in the department immediately afterwards for 10 to 15 minutes.

After the appointment
After the loop diathermy, you may experience some cramps, like period pains. You may wish to take some paracetamol or a similar ‘over the counter’ pain relief medicine 30 minutes before your appointment to help relieve these symptoms.

If possible, try to rest and take things gently for the next few hours after your appointment. You may wish to arrange to take time off work for the rest of the day. If you need to drive after your appointment, you may want someone to come with you, as some people may feel a bit shaky or faint.

There’s no medical reason to avoid travelling after a loop diathermy appointment, but if you have any complications after the procedure while overseas, your insurance may not cover the medical attention you need.

For four weeks after your appointment, you should use sanitary pads, not tampons and avoid having sex to help prevent infection. You can have a shower or a bath as normal, but avoid swimming for at least the first two weeks. You can continue your normal activities, including light exercise, and alcohol may be consumed in moderation.
What happens next?
We will send the test results to you and your GP by post within four weeks after your appointment. We will let you know if you need to come back to the hospital clinic. Make sure you have your next cervical screening at your GP practice in six months’ time.

Side effects

- For a few days after the loop diathermy, you may have some bleeding from your vagina with some further light bleeding after 10 to 14 days. This bleeding is part of the healing process and can last for about four weeks in total.

- There is usually some dark discharge for a few days after the procedure. This may continue as a watery yellowish discharge for another two or three weeks.

- You may notice a temporary change in your menstrual cycle (periods) after the loop diathermy. If this continues to be a problem, please see your GP.

Visit your GP or contact the colposcopy department for advice if you notice:
- heavy blood loss, like a heavy period
- thick or smelly discharge
- a high temperature or fever
- pain in your lower abdomen that does not get better after taking simple pain relief (such as paracetamol).

Long term implications
The cervix usually heals well after this procedure and any long-term side effects are extremely unlikely.

Some women may be concerned that having a loop diathermy will affect their fertility and any future pregnancies. Having one loop diathermy procedure is not associated with an increased risk of infertility or with any increase in preterm labour or preterm labour rupture of membranes. It can slightly increase the risk of a second trimester miscarriage, but this is still a very small risk.

Useful links
www.bscgp.org.uk

Contact us
Please contact us if you have any questions or worries.

Colposcopy department: 023 8120 6034 (8.30am to 4pm, Monday to Friday)
Bramshaw ward: 023 8120 6035 (evenings and weekends)

Colposcopy department, H level, Princess Anne Hospital, Cockeridge Road, Southampton SO16 5YA

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audiotape, please telephone 023 8120 4688 for help.