



**The Leeds
Teaching Hospitals**
NHS Trust

Advice following your Colposcopy

Information for patients

A large, stylized white wave graphic that starts from the bottom left and curves upwards and to the right, ending in a circular shape on the right side of the teal background.

Smoking and cervical cancer

We now know that Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) is the main cause of cervical cancer.

Smoking suppresses the immune system allowing the persistence of high risk human papilloma virus (HPV). **If you also smoke, your risk of developing cervix cancer is increased by more than twenty times.**

An abnormal smear usually indicates continuing presence of HPV. If you have had an abnormal smear and you smoke, it is therefore, essential that you stop smoking.

If you want help to stop smoking, speak to a member of staff who will give you information about how to get support, advice and treatment free from the NHS; or call Leeds Smoking Services on **0800 169 4219** to speak to a trained advisor who will listen to you and give helpful advice.

This information leaflet provides guidance on what to expect following your colposcopy. At your visit, you may either have had biopsies taken from the cervix or had treatment (known as a LLETZ). These are explained below.

Advice following cervical biopsies

A cervical biopsy is taken as a small sample to assess any abnormal area on the cervix, it is not intended to treat the area.

After your biopsy, you may experience some of the following minor symptoms and also have some questions about your after-care. It is advisable that you 'take it easy' for the rest of the day, if you can and avoid heavy exercise for the next 24 hours.

You may experience 'period like' discomfort. This usually settles after a few hours; however, pain relief such as paracetamol or ibuprofen can be taken to ease discomfort. Do not take more than the recommended dose.

After having a biopsy taken, you can expect to experience a black, flaky discharge; sometimes, blood stained (due to a chemical cautery called silver nitrate). This may last a couple of days as healing takes place, before returning to your normal discharge. It is advisable to avoid tampons and sexual intercourse until your discharge has returned to what is normal for you.

If you continue to experience problems or are worried, please contact your GP or the hospital for advice. Contact telephone numbers can be found at the back of this leaflet.

You should receive a letter within 4 - 6 weeks after your biopsy explaining the grade of abnormality and a management plan. If you don't receive a letter, please telephone the colposcopy clinic.

The majority of the smear abnormalities arises in the lining of the outer cervix (Squamous) and the technical term used to refer to cell changes confirmed by biopsy is **cervical intra-epithelial neoplasia**, commonly known as CIN.

Depending on how many cells are affected, CIN is graded as 1 - 3.

- **CIN 1** may be left to return to normal, or may be treated depending on your particular situation or Doctor's opinion
- **CIN 2** is usually treated, but occasionally, your doctor will discuss with you whether it might be possible to wait for it to return to normal
- **CIN 3** will need treatment to return the cells to normal

A small proportion of the smear abnormalities arises in the lining of the inner cervix (Glandular), and the technical term used to refer to cell changes confirmed by biopsy is **cervical glandular intra-epithelial neoplasia**, commonly known as CGIN.

Treatment - LLETZ

Large loop excision of the transformation zone

This treatment is used to treat pre-cancerous changes to the cervix by using a heated loop of wire.

Due to the aftercare advice, we do not usually advise that you have treatment if you are going to be travelling abroad in the following 4 weeks.

After the Doctor / Nurse Practitioner has discussed the treatment with you, your named nurse will take you through to the examination room to undress from the waist down and put on a gown.

The treatment itself takes minutes, it's the setting up of the equipment that takes longer.

You will be in the same position as when you had your smear test. The treatment might be uncomfortable but should not be painful. The Doctor / Nurse Practitioner will insert the same instrument used to take your smear test (a speculum).

To enable the Doctor / Nurse Practitioner to see the area that needs to be treated, solutions will be put on your cervix which can feel cold and wet.

A local anaesthetic injection is given to numb the cervix, some people say this stings. As the anaesthetic contains adrenaline, you may feel your heart race or feel panicky, this feeling will pass.

Whilst the Doctor / Nurse Practitioner is preparing the equipment needed, the nurse will place a cold pad on your thigh. This is called a diathermy pad.

During the treatment, you will hear a vacuum type noise (this is a machine taking away smoke created from the heat treatment) and a beeping sound.

Once the treatment is completed, a ball cautery is used to seal over the blood vessels to stop any bleeding and this also completes the treatment.

You will be offered a drink following your treatment. You will feel well enough to leave the clinic after your treatment, we just advise you to take it easy for the rest of the day.

Please read the following after-care advice as it is important to avoid using tampons and sexual intercourse for 4 - 6 weeks after treatment.

Advice following treatment of the cervix

LLETZ or loop biopsy

After your treatment, you may experience some of the following symptoms and may have some questions about your after-care and what activities you should avoid. It is advisable that you take it easy and avoid heavy exercise for the first 24 hours.

1. You may experience 'period like' discomfort. This usually settles after a few hours; however, pain relief such as paracetamol or ibuprofen can be taken to ease the discomfort. Do not take more than the recommended dose
2. Vaginal discharge varies after treatment, and can last from a few days to 4 - 6 weeks. This loss may be watery / red brown initially, changing as healing takes place, before returning to your normal discharge. It is advisable to use sanitary towels for protection (avoiding tampons) to prevent introducing infection during the healing process. Heavy, fresh blood, immediately after treatment or within the first 2 weeks after treatment, should be regarded as abnormal. If this occurs, seek medical advice. Also, if you notice a smelly, offensive vaginal discharge, this could indicate an infection and you should contact your GP who may prescribe antibiotics
3. Sexual intercourse should be avoided until your discharge has returned to normal
4. Your next period may occur earlier than expected and should not be confused with post-treatment bleeding. It may be heavier and / or longer than usual; this is nothing to worry about

5. Swimming is not recommended whilst experiencing the discharge
6. Having abnormal cells removed will not prevent you from getting pregnant in the future, but there is a small risk of going into preterm labour in future pregnancies (< than 37 weeks), particularly with repeated treatment.

If you continue to experience problems or are worried, please contact your GP or the hospital for advice. The telephone numbers can be found on the back of this leaflet.

You should receive a letter approximately 4 - 6 weeks after your treatment explaining the grade of abnormality removed, and whether the abnormality was seen to be completely removed. If you have not received your results within 8 weeks, please contact the clinic on **(0113) 206 6854** and leave your name, hospital number and contact details.

You will also be advised when to have your next smear (usually 6 months after treatment). This will also be tested for high-risk HPV virus (Test of Cure) and depending on the result of this smear, you will require a normal smear follow-up (3 years) or be asked to return to the colposcopy clinic for follow-up.

Following treatment of CGIN, two negative TOCs at 6 and 18 months following treatment, are required before return to 3 years smear follow-up.

Sometimes, due to destruction of tissue by the heat treatment, the laboratory is unable to say whether the abnormal area has been completely removed. If this is the case, the abnormality will almost certainly have been destroyed by the treatment; however, you may be asked to return to the colposcopy clinic for your first smear.

Useful contact telephone numbers

Wharfedale Hospital Outpatients - **(0113) 392 1559**

Wharfedale Hospital Outpatients - **(0113) 392 1557**

Wharfedale Hospital Gynaecology Secretary - **(0113) 392 1678**

Out of hours Emergency Number

Gynaecology Assessment Unit - **(0113) 206 5724**

NHS Direct

0845 4647

Useful Websites

NHS Cervical Screening Programme

Jo's Trust

BSCCP (British Society for Colposcopy and Cervical Pathology)

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