

LLETZ – Treatment of the Cervix

Patient Information – Gynaecology Services

Do I need to have a LLETZ procedure?

A LLETZ procedure has been recommended to remove abnormal cells from the cervix. This can prevent these cells progressing to a cancer in the future. Most commonly it is recommended as treatment for high grade precancerous cells called CIN (cervical intraepithelial neoplasia) grades 2 and 3 but there are other reasons.

What is a LLETZ?

It is a Large Loop Excision of the Transformation Zone.

The abnormal area is removed using a fine wire loop; a small electric current is passed through the loop. The removed area is sent to a specialist pathologist for detailed testing.

What happens during the procedure?

- LLETZ procedures are usually carried out under local anaesthetic (when you are awake) in the Colposcopy Clinic.
- The doctor will explain the procedure to you and answers any questions you have.
- You are welcome to bring a support person with you if you wish. They can be in the room with you during the procedure. (This is not possible for the small number of women who have a general anaesthetic.)
- Local anaesthetic will be used to numb your cervix, the doctor will then use a colposcope to see a magnified view of your cervix and a fine wire loop is used to remove the abnormal area.
- Please allow a couple of hours for the appointment as sometimes there can be unexpected delays. The procedure itself usually takes about 15 minutes. We will also ask you to stay for a further 20 minutes post procedure to ensure you are feeling well prior to leaving.
- You may be offered a tablet beforehand to help with anxiety and relaxation (oral sedation) which may make you a little bit sleepy and so you will need someone else to drive you home if this has been planned. It is not a general anaesthetic.
- For some women it may be better to have a general anaesthetic as a day case procedure. The doctor will explain the reasons for this, if this has been recommended. If you have a general anaesthetic you will need someone to take you home and stay with you for the first 24 hours after the procedure. *Further information will be provided with your admission instructions once a date is arranged.*

What are the risks of the procedure?

- LLETZ is a very safe procedure to remove abnormal cells, which are at risk of developing into cancer in the future.
- About 5 in every 100 women may have complications of:
 - Infection (which can be treated with antibiotics)
 - Bleeding
 - Not all of the abnormal cells being removed
- Rarely the procedure can cause a scar on the cervix, which may make taking a screening test (previously known as a smear) more difficult in the future. This is more likely if your body isn't making estrogen (post-menopausal women, sometimes women on Depo Provera, or those who are breastfeeding) and can be helped by the use of prescribed vaginal estrogen for two months following the procedure.

Is there a risk to future pregnancies?

- It is important to tell your midwife or obstetrician if you have had a LLETZ procedure as you may need to be monitored more closely. There is a very small risk of premature rupture of membranes or going into labour early.
- Most women who have had a LLETZ procedure have normal healthy pregnancies and babies.
- Research shows that having a LLETZ procedure does not make it more difficult to become pregnant.

What if I am going on holiday?

You may wish to reschedule your LLETZ appointment if you are going on holiday or flying within three weeks of the treatment date. This is because your cervix needs time to heal, as outlined below the advice is no vaginal sex, swimming or vigorous activity for 3 weeks after your LLETZ treatment.

What about my contraception?

If you have an IUD it will usually be removed at the start of the procedure and then replaced with a new device at the end of the procedure. If you take the pill – please continue to take as usual.

What happens after the procedure?

- It is normal to experience period-like cramping, which may last a few days. You can take over the counter medication for pain relief that you would normally use, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen.
- Most women are advised to take a day off work – we will provide a medical certificate if needed.
- It is normal to have some vaginal bleeding, which can be brown or dark coloured. A gritty discharge may also occur for up to 3 weeks following your treatment.

Allow your cervix to heal

The healing process takes up to 3 weeks. During this time it is advised:

- Not to use tampons or menstrual cups (sanitary pads are best).
- Not to have vaginal sex.
- Avoid spas, baths, swimming pools and the sea. Showers are okay.
- Avoid vigorous exercise (normal day-to-day activity and walking are fine) and gently ease back in to exercise routines.

What should I do if I have a problem?

If you experience any of the following:

- Heavy, bright red vaginal bleeding (with or without clots)
- Severe pain, unrelieved by simple pain relief medications
- High temperature – above 37.5°C
- Vaginal discharge which is heavy or offensive smelling

Contact your GP or after hours clinic. **If it is an emergency call an ambulance (111)**

If you are uncertain call the Colposcopy Clinic for advice: phone (03) 364 4466 during office hours.

What follow up will I need?

- You will receive a letter with the results within 6 weeks, a copy will also be sent to your GP. If you have not received your letter after 6 weeks, please phone the Colposcopy Clinic on (03) 364 4466.
- Follow up cervical screening is important to check the abnormality has resolved. Please see your GP or screener at 6 and 18 months after your LLETZ treatment.
- If follow-up screening tests are abnormal, you will be referred to colposcopy for an appointment and ongoing management.

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