

# Having a diathermy loop excision (LLETZ)

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**Welcome to the Colposcopy Clinic. This leaflet aims to help women who are having a diathermy loop excision under either a local or a general anaesthetic.**

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## **What is a diathermy loop excision?**

Diathermy loop excision (also known as LLETZ) is a treatment for abnormal cervical cells from the neck of the womb (cervix). It uses a heated wire loop and is usually carried out under a local anaesthetic (i.e. you are awake). It takes about 10 minutes and you may experience some stinging / discomfort while the local anaesthetic is applied to your cervix. However, this only lasts for a short time until the anaesthetic takes effect. Occasionally, it is necessary to do the treatment under general anaesthetic (i.e. you are asleep) in the Adult Day Surgery Unit.

## **Why do I need a diathermy loop excision?**

When you had your last colposcopy examination, some abnormal pre-cancerous cells were found and a cervical biopsy may have confirmed this. These cells need to be treated to stop them developing.

## **General anaesthetic: Why do I need to come as a day patient?**

It was not possible to treat you in the clinic as you may have found the procedure quite uncomfortable or the area for treatment was too large to treat safely under a local anaesthetic. Therefore, it is being carried out under a general anaesthetic (i.e. you are asleep) in the Adult Day Surgery Unit; however, you will still be able to go home the same day.

## **Will I have to wait long for this procedure?**

No, you will get an appointment in the near future. There is not a long waiting list for this procedure.

## **Holidays / travel abroad**

If you plan to travel abroad for holiday or work, it may be advisable to postpone treatment until after the trip. If you are planning an extended trip abroad, please ring the Colposcopy Department on 0118 322 7197 / 7283 for advice. **Please note** that if you travel abroad, you may not be covered by the insurance company if any complications related to the treatment occur. Please check with your insurance company.

## **Do I have to come to the hospital again before my operation?**

Yes, you will be asked to come to our 'pre-operative assessment clinic'. This will be one or two weeks before your operation. This is a standard procedure to prepare you for the operation. It is important for you to attend the appointment. Please allow at least one hour for your appointment.

## Advice before having treatment

- **If you have a period on the day of your appointment**, unless it is exceptionally heavy, treatment can go ahead. If you are unsure, please contact the clinic.
- **Do not starve yourself before coming to the clinic.** You can eat and drink normally.
- It would be inadvisable for us to carry out treatment if there is any chance of you being pregnant so **please use a reliable contraceptive** while you are waiting for your appointment, even if you do not normally do so.
- **If you have a contraceptive coil fitted**, you should **use an additional method of contraception** (condoms) for seven days before the appointment, as the doctor will take it out at the time of treatment.

## After the treatment

**You may experience period-like abdominal pain or cramp for a few hours after the procedure. You can take mild painkillers, such as Paracetamol or Ibuprofen.**

**You will have some light vaginal bleeding and brown discharge for 2-4 weeks. This can continue for up to 6 weeks. You should use sanitary towels, not tampons.**

You can continue with your daily routine if you feel well enough, but some women feel a little shaky after the treatment. If this were the case, we would advise you to take things easy for the rest of the day and arrange for a friend / relative to accompany you home after treatment.

Your cervix is susceptible to infection whilst healing. For this reason, we advise you to **avoid sexual intercourse, tampons, vaginal douching, swimming and long baths for four weeks** or until your discharge stops completely.

## Risks and complications

This procedure is 95% successful, with the majority of women having no further abnormal smears.

There is some risk associated with most procedures, for this treatment they include:

- **Infection** – Five out of every 100 women may develop an infection. If the vaginal discharge becomes smelly and you develop a raised temperature and a fever, you should contact your GP for treatment with antibiotics.
- If you have any **heavy bleeding** (soaking sanitary towels through within 10-20 minutes), please contact the Colposcopy Clinic on the number at the end of this leaflet. Outside of clinic hours, please ring NHS 111 to book to go to the nearest Emergency Department (A&E).

## Will it affect my sex life?

While your cervix is healing, it is vulnerable to infection. You may also experience some bleeding for up to 4-6 weeks after. For these reasons, you are advised not to have sex for four weeks or until any bleeding or discharge has stopped completely.

## Will I still be able to have babies?

This procedure should not affect your ability to have babies in the future. A single diathermy loop excision very rarely leads to a weakening of the cervical muscle that in turn may affect a

pregnancy before term or earlier. This should have no effect on the baby and most women will deliver their baby near their due date. Your gynaecologist will advise you if they recommend any additional scans in a future pregnancy.

### **Will I need to see the doctor again?**

Usually, the doctor will contact you and your GP directly with your results. This can take up to 4-6 weeks. Unfortunately, we are unable to give results over the telephone.

You will need a further smear test in six months' time. You will be informed by letter whether this will be done at your GP's surgery or back at the Colposcopy Clinic.

### **Useful contacts**

We hope this information will be useful for you. If there is anything you do not understand or if you have any questions, please ask the clinic nurse or telephone us:

Colposcopy Office: 0118 322 7197 (Mon – Friday: 8am – 4pm).

Lead Nurse Colposcopist: 0118 322 7283 (Mon – Friday: 8am – 4pm).

Out of hours – Sonning Ward Emergency Clinic: 0118 322 7181.

The Colposcopy Clinic is located on Sonning Ward, Level 5 Maternity Block, Craven Road.

The following websites also provide further useful information:

1. Women talking about their experience of cervical screening: [www.healthtalkonline.org](http://www.healthtalkonline.org)
2. [www.bsccp.org.uk](http://www.bsccp.org.uk)
3. [www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk](http://www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk)

To find out more about our Trust visit [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

S Toofany, Lead Nurse Colposcopist, July 2014

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