

LLETZ Treatment

This leaflet is for patients who need a colposcopy and LLETZ treatment. It explains the procedures and what they involve. It also tells you about any risks and what happens afterwards.

If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is colposcopy?

Colposcopy is an examination of the cervix (neck of the womb) using magnifying binoculars called a colposcope. It allows the specialist (colposcopist) to have a closer look at your cervix to assess the degree of abnormal change in the cells of your cervix.

What is a LLETZ treatment?

LLETZ stands for 'Large Loop Excision of the Transformation Zone' and is the most common treatment for abnormal cervical cells. During the procedure the colposcopist will remove a small cone-shaped piece of tissue (approximately 1cm by 1cm) from your cervix to remove the abnormal cells.

Why do I need a colposcopy and LLETZ treatment?

You have been referred to the colposcopy clinic because your cervical smear has shown some abnormal cells. These cells are not cancerous but your smear has shown that there are pre-cancerous changes of a moderate or severe variety occurring in the cells of the cervix. This meant that they could develop into cancer if left untreated or unmonitored. You will therefore need to have a colposcopy to confirm the results and possibly treatment (LLETZ) to your cervix to remove any confirmed pre-cancerous cells.

Abnormal cells are caused by a very common virus called Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). The virus is spread via sexual contact and in fact, it is detected in up to 90% of women within five years of becoming sexually active. Most women clear the virus naturally but, if it persists, it can eventually cause the abnormal cells.

What will happen at my appointment?

The consultation, including treatment, will take about 30 minutes. Before the examination, you will be asked some questions about you:

- General health
- Previous operations
- Previous pregnancies / obstetric history
- Medications
- Allergies

- Contraception
- Periods (it is important to know the first day of your last period).

You will be asked to undress the lower half of your body only, to lie on special couch and cover yourself with a sheet. Once you are on the couch, nurses will come into the room to assist both you and the colposcopist.

The colposcopist will start by placing a speculum (instrument that holds the vagina open to allow access to the cervix) into the vagina. This is similar to when you had your smear test. A special solution will be applied to your cervix which helps to identify abnormal areas. This should not be painful but you may feel the sensation of the colposcopist dabbing something on your cervix.

Using the colposcope, the colposcopist will closely examine your cervix and then proceed to the LLETZ Treatment if the examination confirms the presence of moderately or severely pre-cancerous cells. To carry out the LLETZ treatment, the colposcopist will use local anaesthetic (an injection to numb the cervix).

Some women find the insertion of the anaesthetic a bit uncomfortable and can experience an increased heart rate – don't worry, this is perfectly normal and lasts for a very short time.

When your cervix is numb, the colposcopist will remove the affected area using a heated wire loop. This will not hurt but you may feel some pressure.

As part of our preparation, the nurse with you will need to place a sticky pad on your leg. This is needed as part of the equipment for the heated wire loop of the LLETZ. A LLETZ treatment is normally carried out in the outpatient clinic, however arrangements may be made to admit you to the day surgery unit (DSU) if:

- You are not happy to have the treatment under local anaesthetic.
- The colposcopist feels that treatment under local anaesthetic is inappropriate.
- Please note that you will have to attend an outpatient appointment to be added to the waiting list for a pre-operative assessment prior to a day surgery date.

If the changes on the cervix do not look as abnormal as suggested by the smear, then you may simply have a biopsy taken (a small sample of tissue) instead of LLETZ treatment. This will help the colposcopist establish the exact diagnosis. Following the examination, the colposcopist will explain the findings and suggest a further management plan to you. Depending on the results of these tests, your clinician will decide whether you need further visits to the colposcopy department or whether you should be discharged back to your GP / family planning clinic for a cervical smear.

Your test results will be sent to you and your GP within six to eight weeks. If, after eight weeks you have not received these, please call the results line on 020 8725 1615.

What happens after I leave hospital?

We advise that you do not return to work on the day of your treatment. You will be able to resume work or normal activity the next day. You can expect to have bloodstained discharge for up to four to six weeks. During this time, you should:

- Use sanitary pads rather than tampons.
- Avoid sexual intercourse.
- Refrain from swimming.
- Not have baths (shower only, if possible).

When the cervix has healed the discharge will stop. If the bleeding becomes excessive at any stage or if discharge becomes offensive (smells unpleasant), then either call:

- Your GP
- The colposcopy nurse specialist on 020 8725 0221.

Alternatively, you may wish to attend A&E.

Sometimes, the bleeding becomes heavier approximately two weeks after the procedure. Unless it is significantly heavier than a normal period or you are changing pads every hour, there is no cause for concern.

Are there any risks?

There are risks associated with any procedure. Below are the risks particularly associated with having LLETZ treatment:

Short term risks:

- There is a small possibility that the biopsy site may become infected. If you notice an offensive (smelly) vaginal discharge, please contact your GP.
- There is a chance that the treatment may not remove all the abnormal cells. If this is the case, you will be monitored more closely after treatment by the colposcopy team.

Long term risks:

- The cervix can become scarred and narrowed from the treatment. This is more common after two or more treatments. A single treatment is not known to significantly affect your ability to conceive.

- There is a 1% increase to your risk of pre-term labour (delivering a baby earlier than the expected due date). However, it is felt that the risk of developing cervical cancer far outweighs this.

If you are pregnant and require treatment it is important that you tell us so that we can delay the treatment until after the delivery of the baby, if possible.

What can I do to help my cervix?

Research has shown that cigarette smoking is strongly associated with the presence of abnormal cells on the cervix and to the persistence of these abnormal changes, we strongly advise patients to give up smoking. For further help on this matter, please see your GP.

Additional notes

- There is no specific preparation you need to perform for colposcopy.
- It is important to eat something prior to your appointment. Not eating may make you feel faint during or after the examination.
- Treatment can still be carried out if you are menstruating and should not affect the timing of your next menstrual period.
- If you have a 'coil' (copper coil or Mirena system for contraceptive purposes), this may need to be removed to perform treatment. It is usually possible to put in a new coil immediately after your treatment but this is not guaranteed. You are advised to avoid intercourse for one week prior to your appointment in case we are unable to replace the coil immediately.
- If you have a holiday booked within four weeks of your appointment, we will advise you to delay treatment until your return.

Keeping to your appointment time

If you cannot attend your appointment for any reason, please let us know as soon as possible. This will allow us to see another patient and reschedule your visit.

Please attend your appointment on time. If you arrive more than 10 minutes late, it is likely to result in you not being seen that day and having to rebook for another day.

For appointment queries please ring 020 8725 1615 / 4653.

Useful sources of information

If you would like more information, you might find it useful to look at the following websites:

www.nhs.uk

[NHS cervical screening \(CSP\) programme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

www.bsccp.co.uk

Asking for your consent

It is important that you feel involved in decisions about your care. For some treatments, you will be asked to sign a consent form to say that you agree to have the treatment and understand what it involves. You can withdraw your consent at any time, even if you have said 'yes' previously. If you would like more details about our consent process, please ask for a copy of our policy.

Contact us

If you have any questions, please contact your GP or the colposcopy nurse specialists at St George's Hospital on 020 8725 0221. Please also call (or ask someone who speaks English to call) if you have difficulty understanding or reading this information.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing.

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS UK

NHS UK provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency.

NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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