

Information for Patients

About your colposcopy treatment

Welcome to the Colposcopy Service at Saint Mary's Hospital and Trafford Hospital

This leaflet aims to give you some general information about loop and laser treatment and help to answer some of the questions you may have. It is intended as a guide and there will be an opportunity for you to talk to your nurse and doctor about your care and treatment. By understanding more about what is happening, we hope that you will feel less anxious when you come to our clinic.

Why do I need treatment?

Following your recent smear/colposcopy examination you have been advised that you need treatment to the abnormal cells of your cervix. This **does not** mean that you have cancer, but that the cells are showing changes that are **pre-cancerous**. This condition is known as CIN (Cervical Intraepithelial Neoplasia).

There are three grades of CIN: 1, 2 and 3. Your own results will be discussed with you when you come to the clinic. The aim of the treatment is to remove all abnormal cells with the minimum of disruption to normal healthy tissue.

What treatments are available?

The majority of treatments are carried out as out-patient procedures.

There are three methods of treatment used in this clinic:

1. Loop Diathermy Excision

This technique uses an electrically heated fine wire loop to remove the abnormal tissue from your cervix. The piece of tissue is then sent to the laboratory to check that all the abnormal cells have been removed.

2. Laser Ablation

A laser beam is directed on to the area of the cervix which requires treatment. The laser energy vaporises the tissue, completely destroying the abnormal cells. It is necessary to protect the eyes from laser beams, so goggles are worn by yourself and the nurse during this procedure.

3. Cold Coagulation/Ball diathermy

This involves a small heated probe being placed onto the cervix to destroy the abnormal cells.

Your colposcopist will discuss with you which the most appropriate treatment is for you, and this depends on your individual case.

What happens when I come for treatment?

Treatment is very similar to that of the colposcopy examination which you may have already had. The actual treatment takes between 10 and 20 minutes, but you should allow approximately half an hour for the whole visit.

You are welcome to bring a friend, partner or relative with you, and he/she can stay with you throughout the procedure if you wish.

You will be asked to undress from the waist down in a private changing cubicle (you can keep a skirt on). Treatment is relatively painless as a local anaesthetic is given before treatment is commenced.

The local anaesthetic used is called Citanest 3% with Octapressin and is the same anaesthetic used by dentists. This drug is not currently licensed for use on the cervix but is a drug which is widely used and accepted as the drug of choice for this purpose. Please speak to your colposcopist if you have any concerns about this.

You may drive following treatment unless advised otherwise by the colposcopist.

What happens after treatment?

We recommend that you take the day off work if you can. You will probably feel absolutely fine but some women feel slightly faint for a short time. You may experience a period type pain; this is the womb contracting in response to the treatment. It is advisable to take pain relief as you would normally take for period pain.

You may have a red/brown discharge followed by a watery loss for 2-4 weeks following treatment. This discharge should not be excessive or offensive; if it is it could be a sign of infection and you should contact the clinic.

The use of tampons should be avoided for 4 weeks to reduce the risk of infection and allow the cervix to heal; sanitary pads should be worn instead.

Avoid having sexual intercourse for 4 weeks following treatment. By this time the cervix should have fully healed.

It is advisable to avoid swimming for 2 weeks after treatment. You should bathe or shower as normal but try to avoid the use of talcum powder, vaginal deodorants, heavily perfumed soaps and bubble bath as they may cause irritation and increase the risk of infection.

You may continue with other normal activities including light exercise.

Results

Results and a follow up appointment, if required, will be communicated to you in writing, usually within 6 weeks following your treatment. Please note that results are usually not available until this point.

What about getting pregnant?

Treatment will not affect your future fertility and will not increase the risk of miscarriage. However, there is a slightly increased risk of premature labour in women who have had a loop excision or cone biopsy. The risk of premature labour in the general population is approximately 1%; this risk increases to 3% in women who have undergone excisional treatments such as loop excision or cone biopsy. Women who have undergone two or more loop excisions or a cone biopsy will usually be seen in pregnancy by their obstetrician to assess the risk of premature labour. Women who meet this criteria and are under the care of Saint Mary's Hospital for their antenatal care may be referred to the pre-term labour clinic for cervical length scans.

It is advisable to wait until you have had your treatment before trying to conceive as treatment cannot be carried out if you are pregnant.

We recommend that you have a negative smear six months after treatment before trying to conceive.

Follow-up

In most cases you will need to attend the Colposcopy Department for a follow-up Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) test six months after treatment. This is performed in the same way as a smear test. If this test is negative (normal) you are considered to be at low risk of developing further abnormalities in the near future and you can therefore return to routine cervical screening (every 3 years).

If the HPV test is positive then your sample will be screened and if there are any abnormal cells you will return for a colposcopy examination. This does not necessarily mean you will require further treatment.

Your appointment

- You should not attend if you are on a period. Please ring the clinic and ask for another appointment.
- You should tell the doctor or nurse if you think you may be pregnant or if you are pregnant.
- It would be helpful if you could bring a sanitary pad with you.
- You can bring a friend or relative with you.
- It is very important that you let us know if you cannot attend so that your appointment can be given to someone else.
- If you have any queries please telephone the department and a member of staff will be pleased to help you.

Contact details

To cancel or change appointments: (0161) 276 6365 (8.30 am - 3.00 pm)

Secretaries: (0161) 701 6922/276 6387 (8.30 am – 5.00 pm)

Nurse Colposcopists: (0161) 276 5485 (8.30 am - 5.00 pm)

For Trafford Hospital patients: (0161) 746 2260

Emergency Gynaecology unit contact number: (0161) 276 6204