



Saint Mary's Managed Clinical Service Division of Gynaecology

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

CERVICAL ECTOPY

WHAT IS A CERVICAL ECTOPY?

A cervical ectopy is a red, velvet like and often raw looking area with a graze type appearance on the outer surface of the cervix. It is also known as an erosion or ectropion. It is normal and a common condition that does not lead to cervical cancer. It does not necessarily require treatment and often resolves of its own accord.

There are 2 types of cells found in the cervix (neck of the womb):

- Squamous cells – these are smooth, pink cells that cover the outer, visible part of the cervix.
- Columnar or glandular cells – these are fragile, soft, red cells that line the inside of the cervix.

Where these two types of cells meet is called the squamocolumnar junction (SCJ). This junction moves around throughout your life and is influenced by the amount of oestrogen (female hormone) in your body. This causes the columnar cells to roll out onto the outside of the cervix where they become more visible. This can be seen when examined using a speculum (instrument used to see the cervix) as in the pictures below.



Normal cervix



Small ectopy



Large ectopy

WHAT CAUSES CERVICAL ECTOPY?

The most common cause of a cervical ectopy is normal hormonal changes. Individuals who use the combined contraceptive pill may exhibit a cervical ectopy. Changes in hormones during a pregnancy may also influence an ectopy.

SYMPTOMS

For most individuals, a cervical ectopy does not cause any problems and usually resolves over time without treatment. In some people it may cause an increase in vaginal discharge or unexpected vaginal bleeding between periods or after penetrative sex. Bleeding during and or after penetrative sex is caused by knocking or disturbing the columnar cells on the surface of the cervix which are fragile and you may notice bleeding or a blood stained discharge after sex.

Bleeding can also occur if a vaginal infection is present as infections can irritate the area. Some individuals have no symptoms at all, and an ectopy may be an incidental finding during routine examinations such as a cervical screening test.

You should always report abnormal symptoms such as bleeding and discharge.

WHAT IF I AM PREGNANT?

A cervical ectopy is very common during pregnancy. Pregnant individuals are more likely to experience symptoms due to hormonal changes and higher levels of oestrogen in their body. Although these changes are common, any unusual discharge or bleeding in pregnancy should be investigated by your GP, midwife or early pregnancy unit to ensure there is no other cause of the bleeding.

WHAT FOLLOW UP WILL I NEED?

Treatment is not usually necessary, and symptoms will resolve by themselves. If you are pregnant, the ectopy will usually disappear by itself within 3-6 months following the birth of your baby.

If your symptoms are troublesome, you may be referred to a gynaecology clinic for assessment and a discussion regarding treatment to an ectopy. This would involve cauterising (heat treatment) or freezing the cells to alleviate these symptoms.

It is important that if you are invited for routine cervical screening you should attend. This helps to assess your cervix regularly and check for any abnormal cells or changes that may need further assessment.

It is important to contact the unit or your GP if you have continuous bleeding, heavy bleeding, are passing clots, have abdominal pain or an offensive vaginal discharge.

If you require any further information or clarification of terminology, please do not hesitate to talk to one of the doctors or nurses, who will be happy to discuss your concerns.

CONTACT DETAILS



Emergency Gynaecology Unit (EGU)

(0161) 291 2561 (24 hours)

The EGU is located at Wythenshawe Hospital (enter via entrance 15)

The department operates a telephone triage service you must call and speak with a specially trained nurse before attending to plan your care

There are no emergency gynaecology services at Saint Mary's Hospital, Oxford Road



Gynaecology Assessment Unit (GAU/G2)

(0161) 720 2010 GAU Reception / (0161) 604 5130 GAU Nurses

Monday to Friday – 07:30 -20:30

Saturday & Sunday – 08:30 – 16:30

GAU is located at North Manchester Hospital (Ward G2, via Entrance 1 / main entrance).

To be seen in GAU a referral from your GP, Midwife, A&E or other health care professional is required. GAU is not a self-referral unit