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Loop Electrosurgical Excision Procedure

Cells on the cervix grow and shed all the time. Sometimes these cells change and become abnormal. This may be an early warning that cancer may occur. When tests show that you have abnormal cells on your cervix, your doctor may suggest the loop electrosurgical excision procedure (LEEP). LEEP is used to remove the abnormal cells from your cervix.

The Cervix

The cervix is covered by a thin layer of tissue like your skin. The cells that make up this tissue grow all the time.

When this normal process is changed in some way, cells become abnormal. This condition is known as dysplasia.

A Pap test detects changes in the cervix. Other tests, such as colposcopy and biopsy, also are used.

Treating Dysplasia

Abnormal cells can be removed with LEEP. This allows new healthy cells to grow. LEEP is just one way to treat dysplasia. Dysplasia also can be treated with other procedures such as cryosurgery, electrocautery, laser or cone biopsy.

The LEEP Procedure

LEEP uses a thin wire loop that acts like a scalpel (surgical knife). An electric current is passed through the loop, which cuts away a thin layer of the surface cells.

The procedure should be done when you're not having your menstrual period. This allows a better view of the cervix.

You may be given pain relief before the doctor begins.

A solution is applied to your cervix to show the abnormal cells.

Your cervix will be numbed with local anesthesia.

The loop is inserted through the vagina to the cervix. There are different sizes and shapes of loops that can be used. After the procedure, a special paste may be applied to your cervix to stop any bleeding. The tissue that is removed will be studied in a lab to confirm the diagnosis.

Risks

Although problems seldom occur with LEEP, there can be some complications. You may feel faint during the procedure or have some bleeding.

You should contact your doctor if you have any of the following:

- Heavy bleeding (more than your normal period)
- Bleeding with clots
- Severe abdominal pain
- Fever (more than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit)
- Foul-smelling discharge

Your Recovery

It may take a few weeks for your cervix to heal. While your cervix heals, you may have:

- Vaginal bleeding
- Mild cramping
- A brownish-black discharge

For a few weeks after the procedure, you should not have sex or use tampons or douches.

Staying Healthy

After the procedure, you will need to see your doctor for follow-up visits during the year.

Finally ...

LEEP is an effective and simple way to treat dysplasia.

This excerpt from ACOG's Patient Education Pamphlet is provided for your information. It is not medical advice and should not be relied upon as a substitute for visiting your doctor. If you need medical care, have any questions, or wish to receive the full text of this Patient Education Pamphlet, please contact your obstetrician-gynecologist.