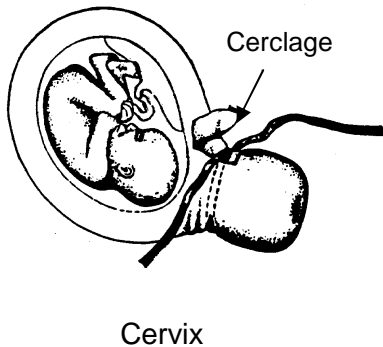




Cervical Cerclage



Your Doctor Has Recommended a Cerclage

A *cerclage* is a surgical procedure to stitch your cervix, the opening of your uterus, closed. A closed cervix helps your baby to stay inside your uterus until your due date is near or you have reached 37 to 38 weeks of pregnancy. When your cervix is weak (sometimes called *incompetent*) you are more likely to have your baby prematurely because your cervix shortens or opens too early. Our goal is to prevent these early changes in your cervix. The best time for this procedure is in the third month (12 to 14 weeks) of pregnancy. Sometimes a cerclage is placed later in pregnancy and is known as an *emergent* cerclage. This later type is placed after changes such as opening or shortening of the cervix have already begun. If this happens you will also probably need a cerclage placed during future pregnancies. Be sure to tell your health care provider.

Why doesn't everyone who has had a preterm birth get a cerclage?

There are many causes of preterm birth. Only women with an abnormal cervix can be helped by a cerclage. Even with a cerclage, other problems can cause birth too early. During the rest of this pregnancy, you will be checked often for other complications like infection and preterm labor.

You must know the signs and symptoms of preterm labor. We urge you to take our Preventing Preterm Birth Class between 18 and 24 weeks of pregnancy. Check with your clinic nurse for dates and times.

What should I expect to happen now?

You will be seen in the clinic. Your medical history will be reviewed and a thorough exam of your cervix will be made before surgery is done. This will include *transvaginal ultrasound*, which allows us to see and measure your cervix very carefully. You will probably have several of these ultrasounds during the rest of your pregnancy.

A doctor who is specially trained in high risk pregnancy care will place your cerclage. You will meet this doctor at your clinic visit. You will also meet with a nurse from the Surgery Center (your *pre-anesthesia visit*) to talk about pain control for the procedure. Most women have spinal or epidural anesthetic (numbing) but general (asleep) anesthesia is sometimes used also. Write down any questions you think of so that you are ready to ask them during your visit.

How do I get ready for the procedure?

For 24 hours before the procedure do not put anything into your vagina. Do not douche or have intercourse.

On the night before surgery, you should eat a light meal at dinner.
Do not eat or drink anything, even water, after midnight.

On the day of the surgery arrive on time at the scheduled place. Have someone bring you and take you home afterwards. You will need someone to stay with you and take care of any other family members at home for 24 hours after the surgery.

What happens after the procedure?

You may stay in the hospital for several hours or overnight so that you can be monitored for preterm labor.

Your doctor may give you medicine to prevent infection or preterm labor. You may get a prescription to continue medication at home. The person bringing you home from the hospital might get your medicines before you go home so that you do not have to make an extra trip to your pharmacy.

For 2 to 3 days after the surgery, you should plan to relax quietly at home. You do not need to be on bedrest, but do not overdo it – no unnecessary physical activity. Your doctor will talk with you about when to plan to resume your regular activities, including sexual intercourse, and work outside the home.

Questions ?

Your questions and concerns are important to us. Call the Clinic or Labor and Delivery if you have questions or concerns about your cerclage or your recovery.

Maternal and Infant
Care Clinic:
206-598-4070
Weekdays
8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Labor and Delivery:
206-598-4616
After hours and on
weekends

Warning Signs

Call if you notice any of these warning signs after your cerclage is placed.

- Contractions or cramping.
- Lower abdominal or back pain that comes and goes like labor pain.
- Vaginal bleeding that seems like more than what your doctor told you to expect.
- A fever over 100°F or 37.8° C, or chills.
- Nausea and vomiting.
- Foul-smelling vaginal discharge.
- “Rupture of membranes” or your bag of water breaking or leaking.

You will have an appointment to see your doctor 7 to 10 days after surgery. Your care provider will talk with you about when your cerclage will be removed – around week 37 or 38 of your pregnancy.

Your pre-surgery clinic visit is:

Your surgery date is:

Your post-op clinic visit is:

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206-598-4070