About Your LEEP Procedure

What to expect

Your health care provider is advising you to have a LEEP procedure because you have abnormal cells on your cervical biopsy and Pap smear.

This handout tells you what to expect during and after this procedure.

What is a LEEP procedure?

LEEP stands for loop electrosurgical excision procedure. This procedure is done in clinic to remove the abnormal area on your cervix. During the procedure, your provider uses a fine wire loop to remove the abnormal cells. An electrical current is passed through this wire loop. As the cells are removed, the electric current seals off the area. This allows cutting and coagulation (quick stopping of bleeding) to occur at the same time. You should have very little discomfort or blood loss from your LEEP procedure.

How is the procedure done?

The procedure begins with an examination of your cervix to locate the area of abnormal cells. This exam is done with a magnifying lens called a colposcope. For the exam, diluted vinegar is applied to your cervix. Then your provider looks at your cervix through the colposcope. You may also have had this exam at an earlier visit.

Once the abnormal area is located, a small amount of local anesthetic (numbing medicine) mixed with epinephrine (a hormone) is injected. The epinephrine in the numbing medicine decreases the amount of bleeding during the procedure. But, it can also cause your heart to beat faster, and this may be uncomfortable. This feeling will last for about 5 minutes.

After the injection, the abnormal cells on your cervix are then removed using the LEEP machine.

Remember: The LEEP procedure removes the abnormal area of cells on your cervix. It does not remove the high-risk HPV (human papillomavirus) that caused these abnormal cells. There is currently no treatment for high-risk HPV infections.
What can I expect after the procedure?

You may have some bleeding that can range from moderate (like a menstrual period) to a brownish discharge for up to 2 weeks after your LEEP procedure.

You will also need to follow some precautions to give your cervix time to heal. For 4 weeks after your procedure, do not:

- Use tampons
- Have sexual intercourse
- Douche
- Lift heavy objects
- Go swimming, take baths, or sit in a hot tub

Follow-up Appointment

You will have the option to make a follow-up appointment in 4 to 6 weeks. But, this appointment is not needed if you are doing well.

During your LEEP procedure visit, you and your provider will talk about several possible ways to follow up after your procedure. Your follow-up will depend on the results of your LEEP pathology report (what was found when the abnormal cells that were removed were examined).

Some ways to follow up are to:

- Be tested for high-risk HPV in 1 year if the pathology report shows no sign of abnormal cells or cancer in the cervical canal.
- Follow up in 6 months if there is no sign of cancer, but there are some abnormal cells in the cervical canal.
- Have a phone call with your provider to talk about any further recommendations for treatment if the pathology report shows some other finding. This usually requires further evaluation.

We will send you a letter by mail with your pathology report results. The letter will include our recommendations for follow-up.

Remember, you can make an appointment for 4 to 6 weeks after your LEEP procedure if you would like to have a follow-up exam of your cervix. At this appointment your provider will look at how your cervix is healing, talk with you about your pathology report in person, and remind you about your follow-up options.