



Patient information

Large loop excision of the transformation zone (LLETZ)

Introduction

When a woman is first told she has abnormal cervical changes that require treatment, her first reaction is often one of fear. Even if the doctor or nurse has explained the treatment, she may be unable to take in all the details. This leaflet has been written to provide information to keep for reference with the aim of reducing anxiety.

Why do I need LLETZ?

Following your recent cervical screening test (smear) and/or colposcopy and cervical biopsy, you have been advised that you need treatment to the cervix because of pre-cancer changes, also known as Cervical Intraepithelial Neoplasia (CIN). LLETZ treatment has the aim of removing the CIN to prevent it developing into cancer in the future.

CIN is caused by a virus called Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) which can affect anyone, is very common and usually clears up on its own. If HPV persists, it may lead to CIN.

What is LLETZ?

LLETZ is a simple treatment to remove pre-cancer changes from the cervix. Whilst you are under general anaesthetic, local anaesthetic is injected to the cervix, and then a fine wire loop is heated by electricity (electro-cautery) to remove the affected tissue on the cervix. This electro-cautery is then applied to the cervix to cauterise it. The tissue removed is sent to the laboratory to be checked.

What happens when I come for LLETZ?

You will be invited to attend Crawley Surgical Short Stay Unit (CSSSU) for a morning or afternoon list. You will be advised of time of arrival and starving instructions in your booking appointment letter. Due to our unit being small, and our desire to protect everyone's privacy and dignity we respectfully ask that relatives or friends do not stay. We understand that it is a very anxious time for you, and our aim is to make your experience as smooth as possible. Once your bed is ready you will be invited into the unit and meet the nurse looking after you. You will be admitted by them or a member of the

team before meeting with your anaesthetist and surgeon. We will keep you up to date of where your slot on the list is. Once your LLETZ procedure is completed and you are back on the ward we will aim to give you something to eat and drink and have you ready to go home in around 2 hours.

Are there any risks associated with LLETZ?

The risks and complications associated with LLETZ affect a very small minority of women. The main ones are:

- **Bleeding.** You are likely to have a little bleeding during treatment. Unexpected heavy bleeding will be stopped by the gynaecologist before you leave the theatre. A very small number of women experience heavy bleeding 7-10 days after LLETZ requiring them to visit their GP or A&E department for assessment.
- **Infection.** Vaginal discharge is expected after treatment. However, if this is associated with heavy bleeding, raised temperature, pain and/or offensive discharge it may indicate a minor infection. This is easily treated by a short course of antibiotics from your GP.
- **Cervical stenosis** (narrowing of the cervix). This may make it difficult to obtain accurate follow up cervical smears. It is more likely to affect post-menopausal women or, very rarely. Women who have repeated LLETZ treatment

Rare complications:

- Damage to surrounding organs, for example bladder or bowel or heavy bleeding requiring blood transfusion are **extremely rare** complications associated with LLETZ.

What should I do following LLETZ treatment?

To help the cervix to heal and prevent complications we advise the following:

1. Do not use tampons for 4 weeks
2. Do not have sexual intercourse for 4 weeks
3. Avoid swimming for 2 weeks following treatment
4. Although there are no known health grounds for avoiding travel, overseas medical assistance may not be covered by insurance.

You may experience period-like pain which should be relieved by a painkiller such as paracetamol or ibuprofen.

You are likely to experience some bleeding/vaginal discharge after treatment. This may not start immediately and may continue for as long as 4 weeks. The discharge may vary from slight spotting to a flow as heavy as an average period. It should not be excessively heavy or offensive smelling. Please seek advice from the Colposcopy Clinic or your GP if you are bleeding excessively. If excessively heavy bleeding persists, please go to Accident & Emergency at East Surrey Hospital.

You are advised to go home and rest following LLETZ treatment under general anaesthetic. You can return to work in about 2 or 3 days, dependent on how you are feeling. Normal activities, including light exercise may continue thereafter. Alcohol may be consumed in moderation

If you have any problems please contact Crawley Surgical Short Stay Unit on 01293 600 300 x4112.

You may prefer to speak to your GP or if you need advice out of hours, please contact Brockham Ward at East Surrey Hospital, 01737 868511 x1652.

Notification of results

Your gynaecologist will write to you with the results of your treatment and send a copy to your GP, usually within 4 weeks

What about follow-up?

We will let you know what follow-up is recommended. It is important that you are aware you should continue to follow-up cervical screening tests (smears) after LLETZ treatment. There is a small chance that HPV and CIN can re-occur but providing you attend for follow up smears, any changes can be identified and dealt with promptly.

How often do I need to have a cervical screening test (smear) in the future?

Following treatment for CIN you are advised to attend for a cervical screening test (smear) in 6 months. If the result is normal, borderline or mild, the sample will be tested for HPV. If the result is abnormal or HPV is detected, further colposcopy is recommended. If the result is normal with no HPV detected, your next cervical screening test will be due in 3 years.

Following treatment for glandular abnormalities (CGIN) your follow-up will be advised by your clinician.

What about future pregnancy?

A single LLETZ treatment is not associated with any increased risk of infertility. Research has suggested an increased risk of pre-term/late miscarriage and low birth weight babies following LLETZ treatment. The risks are very small and associated with having more than one LLETZ and/or deeper than usual treatment.

It is obviously very important to have LLETZ treatment to prevent pre-cancer changes from developing into cancer. Please be reassured that consideration to your future fertility is an important aspect of our care.

Useful websites for further information:

www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk

www.jotrust.co.uk

www.bsccp.co.uk

We hope you find the information in this leaflet helpful, which has been developed with feedback from patients. We welcome any suggestions you may have for improvements or additions.

Contact us

Crawley Surgical Short Stay Unit
Crawley Hospital
West Green Drive
Crawley, RH11 7DH
01293 600 300 x4112

Colposcopy clinic
Crawley Hospital
West Green Drive
Crawley, RH11 7DH
01293 600 300 x4057/4058

www.surreyandsussex.nhs.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Telephone: 01737 231 958

Email: [**pals@sash.nhs.uk**](mailto:pals@sash.nhs.uk)

Write to: PALS, East Surrey Hospital
Redhill, Surrey RH1 5RH

You can also ask a member of staff to contact PALS on your behalf.

This information can be made available in other languages and formats, including in larger text. Contact 01737 231 958 for help.

Author: Colposcopy/CW/MDB/JS.
Last updated: May 2017