

Removal of a cervical polyp in the outpatient department

This leaflet aims to answer your questions about having a cervical polyp removed. It explains the benefits, risks and alternatives, as well as what you can expect when you come to hospital.

If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is a cervical polyp?

A polyp is a growth of tissue from either the outside of the cervix (neck of the womb) or inside the cervical canal (the passageway between the vagina and the womb). Polyps are usually benign (not cancerous) and can be removed quite easily.

There are often no symptoms and the polyp will only be noticed when a woman has had a smear test. However, some polyps can cause bleeding after sexual intercourse, bleeding between periods, bleeding after the menopause, or discharge.

We may suggest an ultrasound scan to check that there are no other polyps within the womb or to assess where the base of the polyp starts. **This will be done in clinic at the same appointment.**

What are the benefits - why should I have the polyp removed?

- A small percentage of polyps (between 2 and 15 in every 1,000) are abnormal and may develop into cancer if left.
- Removing the polyp should make symptoms such as bleeding after sexual intercourse or in between periods return to normal.
- A polyp sometimes makes it difficult to take an adequate smear test, which means you could be asked to have more frequent smear tests.
- If left, a polyp may continue to grow.

What are the risks of having the polyp removed?

- Bleeding sometimes occurs after the polyp has been removed. A chemical substance called silver nitrate can be applied to stop any bleeding.
- Some polyps are too large to be removed in the outpatient department and may need to be removed in theatre. This would need to be arranged for a future appointment.
- There is a very small risk of infection following removal of a cervical polyp. An offensive (bad) smelling discharge is a sign that an infection has occurred. If you suspect that you have an infection you should either contact the clinic or see your GP.

Are there any alternatives?

The only alternative is to not remove the polyp. If you would prefer not to have the polyp removed you will be monitored at regular intervals.

What happens during the procedure to remove the polyp?

Cervical polyps are removed with an instrument called polyp forceps. This instrument is used to grasp the base of the polyp and the polyp is removed with a gentle twisting motion.

Occasionally, if the doctor or nurse cannot see the base of the polyp, a procedure called a hysteroscopy is performed. This involves passing a small camera through the neck of the womb to see if the polyp starts in the cervix or in the womb (see our leaflet, **Having a hysteroscopy** for more information).

If bleeding occurs, a caustic substance called silver nitrate is applied to the area to stop the bleeding.

The polyp is then sent to the laboratory for examination to make sure that the tissue is normal.

Asking for your consent

We want to involve you in decisions about your care and treatment. If you decide to go ahead, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This states that you agree to have the treatment and you understand what it involves. If you would like more information about our consent process, please speak to a member of staff caring for you.

Will I feel any pain?

Having a cervical polyp removed is not painful, however, you may feel mild discomfort similar to period pain afterwards. If you are uncomfortable, a mild painkiller will be offered to you.

What happens after the procedure?

We will give you a sanitary towel to wear, as you will have some discharge which can continue for 7–14 days. If silver nitrate was used, the discharge may be dark brown in colour for the first few days, and it is particularly important that you **do not have sexual intercourse for at least three days as the chemical can make your partner quite sore.**

What do I need to do after I go home?

You should not use tampons while you are bleeding or passing discharge, and sexual intercourse should also be avoided. You can take a bath or shower as normal.

If you feel any discomfort you should take a pain reliever such as paracetamol, following the instructions on the packet.

What should I do if I have a problem?

If you have a problem or are worried, you can ring the McNair Centre helpline, contact the Emergency Pregnancy and Acute Gynaecology Unit (EPAGU, see contact details below) or see your GP.

Will I have a follow-up appointment?

You will not routinely be given a follow-up appointment, but there is a telephone helpline for you to call if you need to (contact details below). You will be advised to ring for the result of the polyp examination, however you will be contacted if the polyp is found to be abnormal. The results will be available within one to two weeks.

What shall I do if I have a problem or concern?

If you have any concerns, please:

- contact or visit your GP
- call the gynaecology ward for advice on 020 7188 2703 or 020 7188 2697
- call NHS Direct on 0845 4647 and speak to a specially trained nurse
- go to your nearest accident and emergency (A&E) department or call 999 in the event of an emergency.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about having a cervical polyp removed, or if need advice after the procedure, please contact the McNair Centre helpline on **020 7188 3023** (Wednesday afternoon, 2pm – 4pm) or the Emergency Pregnancy and Acute Gynaecology Unit (EPAGU) on **020 7188 0864** (Monday–Friday, 8.30am–7pm, and Saturday–Sunday, 9.30am to 3.15pm).

Further information

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) e: complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815 e: languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

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