



Factsheet: Large loop excision of the transformation zone (LLETZ)

Having a LLETZ procedure is similar to having a colposcopy. LLETZ, like colposcopy, will usually not be performed if you have your period. Before your appointment you will have received information about the procedure.

LLETZ is performed in a hospital so you will be admitted as an out-patient. The procedure should take about five minutes and is carried out under local anaesthetic. You will be asked to sign a consent form prior to treatment. Do ask questions or discuss any concerns you have with the colposcopist or clinic nurse who will be with you throughout the procedure.

Most colposcopy clinics have a chair especially designed for colposcopy examinations. You will be asked to sit in the chair and your legs will be positioned on leg rests, the chair is then tilted backwards. He/she will then place a speculum in the vagina so that they can see your cervix. They will then examine your cervix through a colposcope.

During the examination they will apply similar solutions used in colposcopy to highlight the abnormal area(s) to be removed. Once these areas have been identified the colposcopist will inject a local anaesthetic into your cervix, using a very thin needle.

Every individual reacts differently and this can be a little uncomfortable for some. If there is still some pain being felt or continued discomfort then further local anaesthetic can be administered. You must tell the colposcopist if you feel any pain.

Once the area is sufficiently numb the colposcopist removes the abnormal area with the wire loop. The loop is used to remove the abnormal tissue in one piece and to seal any bleeding blood vessels. This should not be painful, however, some women can feel a degree of discomfort usually in the form of pressure or an abdominal ache, often described as similar to period pains.

Pain relief can be given if this discomfort persists. It is useful to have some pain relief medication (such as you would take for period pains) in case you need to take some when you are at home. Some bleeding can be experienced immediately afterwards - this should not be heavy and the nurse will give you a panty liner to wear for your protection. The removed tissue is sent to a laboratory for histology.

The pathologist will report on the type of abnormality present in the specimen and whether the sample has 'clear margins' i.e. it looks as if the area of abnormality has been removed in its entirety.

You and your GP will receive a letter letting you know the results of this histology examination. Do check with your colposcopist or clinic nurse the length of time you will need to wait between having the LLETZ and receiving the letter.

Will I feel OK after LLETZ?

Everyone is different; some women attend their appointments alone, have the treatment, feel OK and return either to work or go home. Others feel more reassured by bringing a family member or friend with them, who can drive them home. Some women can feel 'washed out' or tender afterwards and need a day or two to recover.

What is important is that you do what is best for you to achieve a full recovery. Consultants/nursing specialists usually advise their patients to take the day off and if they are feeling nervous or anxious about the treatment to take someone with them. The majority of women feel well enough to return to work the following day but some do not and need another day or two to recover.

What can I do or not do after LLETZ?

The healing process following LLETZ can differ from person to person. The cervix should heal completely within four to six weeks, but some women make a full recovery as early as three weeks. A vaginal discharge is usual for some weeks following treatment and is part of the healing process. It should stop or return to 'normal' as soon as the cervix is healed.

However, if it persists, becomes heavier or has an offensive smell then you should see your GP. He/she can check for any signs of infections and that healing is progressing. Occasionally antibiotics are

prescribed to assist the healing process. At the end of the treatment you will be given both verbal and written advice as to how best to achieve a full recovery, which includes:

- You can have a bath/shower from the day of the treatment
- You can return to work the following day if you feel well enough
- Sexual intercourse is not advised for four weeks - or until the vaginal discharge ceases
- Avoid using tampons until the vaginal discharge ceases
- Avoid strenuous exercise for two to three weeks such as aerobics/running and other sports
- Limit air travel if possible
- Avoid any heavy lifting or carrying of heavy objects
- Do not swim for two weeks - or until the vaginal discharge ceases
- Do not use vaginal douching until the vaginal discharge ceases.

This factsheet has been produced by Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust. We're the UK's only charity dedicated to women, their families and friends affected by cervical abnormalities and cervical cancer.

If you would like more information about cervical cancer, HPV and cervical screening please go to: www.jostrust.org.uk

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