

# The Loop Electrosurgical Excision Procedure

**What is LEEP?** The loop electrosurgical excision procedure (LEEP) is a way to remove abnormal tissue that may become cancerous from the cervix. Unlike other ways of treating precancerous lesions of the cervix, LEEP removes the abnormal tissue without destroying it. The removed tissue can then be examined in the laboratory. About 95 percent of patients are cured of their problem following LEEP.

**What are the advantages of LEEP?** LEEP offers several advantages over other methods of treating lesions on the cervix:

- It can be done in your doctor's office.
- It is quick.
- There is very little bleeding afterwards.
- It removes more abnormal tissue than freezing (cryosurgery) removes.

**How is LEEP done?** When you come in for LEEP, you will be asked to sign a consent form. The procedure will be scheduled about one week after your last period. LEEP cannot be performed during your period or if you have an infection of the cervix or uterus.

You will be placed in the stirrups in the same way as for a pelvic exam. A medical tool called a speculum will be inserted into your vagina, and your cervix will be checked with a colposcope (an instrument with a magnifying lens used for examination). Vinegar and iodine will be applied to the cervix to help identify the abnormal tissue. A local anesthetic will be used to numb your cervix. The abnormal tissue will be removed with a thin wire loop that cuts through the tissue. The entire procedure takes about 10 minutes to complete.

---

## **What are the possible complications of LEEP?**

As with any procedure, LEEP has some minor complications:

- You may have some discomfort (mild cramping) for several hours after LEEP.
- You may have some heavy bleeding, either right after the procedure or one to four weeks later. In this case, more surgery may have to be done to stop the bleeding. However, this complication is rare. Most bleeding can be managed in the doctor's office. A brownish-black vaginal discharge for the first week is normal.
- You may develop an infection of the cervix or uterus. Infection is rare, however, and can be treated with antibiotics.

## **What should I do after LEEP?**

After LEEP is performed, please follow these instructions:

- Do not have sexual intercourse for three to four weeks.
- Avoid heavy lifting for three to four weeks.
- Do not use tampons for three to four weeks. Use sanitary napkins to protect your clothing.
- If spotting or bleeding lasts longer than one week, call your doctor's office.
- If you develop bleeding with clots, call your doctor's office.
- If you have severe abdominal pain, fever or a foul-smelling vaginal discharge, call your doctor's office.
- Return to your doctor's office in four months for a follow-up visit. This is very important to make sure that your problem has cleared up.

Even though LEEP has many advantages over other methods of treating precancerous lesions, it does not ensure an absolute cure the first time you have the procedure. Your doctor will want to see you often for follow-up exams during the first two years after LEEP is done. If your Pap smears continue to be abnormal, additional treatment may be necessary. It is important that you come to your doctor's office for your follow-up visits.



This handout provides a general overview on this topic and may not apply to everyone. To find out if this handout applies to you and to get more information on this subject, talk to your family doctor.

*The American Academy of Family Physicians, one of the nation's largest medical specialty groups, is committed to promoting and maintaining high standards for family doctors—the doctors who give ongoing, comprehensive care to people of all ages.*

© 1992, 1996 American Academy of Family Physicians  
8880 Ward Parkway, Kansas City, MO 64114-2797  
<http://www.aafp.org>

Permission is granted to reproduce this material for nonprofit educational uses. Written permission is required for all other uses, including electronic uses.