

For further information

Please contact the colposcopy department on 020 7288 5118,
Monday – Friday 9.00 am to 4.00 pm

whh-tr.womenshealthadmin@nhs.net

Clinical Advice: Nurses Line: 0207 288 3138. Please leave a
message; response within 24 hours (weekdays)

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our
PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet
please email whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net. We will try our
best to meet your needs.

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Date published: 22/06/2022
Review date: 22/06/2024
Ref: ACW/WH/LVDTTC/04

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Laser Vaporisation in the Day Treatment Centre



What is laser vaporisation treatment?

It is a minor operation to treat an area of abnormal cells from the cervix (neck of the womb) or the vagina. A laser, which is a strong thin beam of light, is used to vaporise and destroy the area of abnormality. The procedure takes approximately 20 minutes. This is usually performed under general anaesthetic or sedation and is a day surgery procedure.



Closure of the cervix (Cervical Stenosis)

This may occur in up to two per cent of women* after the procedure. Those most at risk of this rare complication are the ones having infrequent or no periods, because of the menopause, breast feeding after pregnancy, contraceptive injections or hormonal disorders. The cervical opening becomes constricted, which can result in painful periods and in this instance difficulty in becoming pregnant.

To reduce this risk, postmenopausal patients undergoing treatment will usually be advised to use hormone replacement therapy for three months (if there are no contraindications) to create monthly bleeds whilst the cervix heals. Those with a hormonal imbalance or using contraception that stops periods are advised to use a combined oral contraceptive pill for at least three months (if there are no contraindications).

Please talk to your surgeon before your operation if you have any concerns about these risks.

*we mean women and people with a cervix

Risks and Complications

This is a very safe operation, but there is some risk associated with most procedures. They include:

Bleeding – as described earlier, some bleeding/ watery discharge is to be expected but some will experience heavier bleeding, which may require further cautery (burning away of tissue). If you have a heavy bleed that is not your period and soaks through a sanitary towel within two hours you should contact your GP or the Whittington hospital Accident & Emergency department.

Infection – five per cent of those undergoing treatment may develop an infection. Most commonly this occurs ten days after the procedure. If the vaginal discharge becomes offensive smelling, you develop a fever or you get severe abdominal pain, you should contact your GP as you may need a prescription for a course of antibiotics. As ninety-five per cent of people remain well, it is not usual to routinely prescribe antibiotics to all.

Reasons for having this procedure

This procedure is to treat cervical, vaginal or vulval pre-cancers, ectropion, or wart/condyloma. The aim is to destroy these abnormal lesions. Ninety-five per cent of women* who undergo treatment for cervical pre-cancer will have their follow-up smear return to normal. For the remaining five per cent, some further treatment may be necessary at a later stage. It is for this reason that regular follow-up smears with your doctor are important.

On the Day of the Procedure

Please remove any jewellery (including rings in belly button, clitoris, labia and vulval areas) and nail varnish before you come in the hospital.

Please come into the clinic at the date and time given in your letter and bring any medication that you are taking with you in the containers. If you take warfarin, aspirin or any other blood thinning medicine, please inform the colposcopist before any treatment. Also, tell the nurse if you have diabetes or any allergies.

Your surgeon will see you and ask you to sign a consent form to confirm that you understand the procedure and agree to go ahead with it. Please ask any questions that you may have about the treatment.

The Procedure

The surgeon will insert a speculum and perform a colposcopy examination exactly as you had done in the clinic. Local anaesthetic will be injected in the cervix using a fine syringe. The abnormal area will be removed. Any removed tissue will be sent to the laboratory for further investigation. The procedure will take about twenty minutes. Sometimes a gauze dressing may be placed inside the vagina: this is called a vaginal pack. Local anaesthetic contains adrenaline, which can cause palpitations or shaking of the legs for a few minutes after the injection.

After the Procedure

You will return to the day surgery ward to rest for two to three hours. You can have a hot or cold drink and a snack as soon as you feel like it. Please ask the nurse for painkillers if you have any period like pains. You can go home after the nurse has checked that it is safe for you to do so. A letter will be sent to your GP and you can be given a copy if you wish.

Going home

You must arrange for a relative or friend to take you home and stay with you for 24 hours. Do not drink alcohol, drive or use machinery. Most people who undergo treatment can resume most of their everyday activities within a day.

Some 'period' like pain is expected so you should take painkillers as directed, but the pain usually wears off a few hours after the procedure. The operation will not usually alter the timings of your next period. You can expect to have some light blood-stained and watery discharge or light bleeding for up to one month following your operation. It is best to avoid using a tampon for four weeks and use sanitary towels instead and avoid sexual intercourse during this time: this is to reduce the risk of infection after the procedure. Avoid lifting heavy items that need two hands and strenuous physical exercise for two weeks: this is to reduce the risk of heavy bleeding after the procedure.

Avoid travelling abroad during the recovery period (4 weeks) unless your specialist doctor agrees that it is safe for you to do so. You can usually return to work five to seven days after your operation. Your follow-up appointment will usually be six months after your operation.

You will have a smear test and a human papillomavirus (HPV)-DNA test, to ensure that the virus responsible for the changes has disappeared. You will receive a letter in the post instructing you how to book this appointment shortly after the procedure. It is best to avoid becoming pregnant before this appointment.