



LOOP ELECTROSURGICAL EXCISION PROCEDURE (LEEP)

WHAT IS IT?

LEEP is an outpatient procedure using an instrument that sends a low-voltage electrical current to a fine metal loop. The metal loop cuts and cauterizes abnormal tissue, allowing for safe, relatively bloodless removal of a cone-shaped cervical biopsy.

WHAT CONDITIONS IS IT DESIGNED TO TREAT?

LEEP is used to remove abnormal tissue in the cervix discovered by Pap smear and confirmed by colposcopy. Entire areas of precancerous cells can be removed.

HOW IS THE PROCEDURE DONE?

Local anesthetic is used to numb the cervix. The cervix may be treated with acetic acid (vinegar) to reveal abnormal tissue before excising. The pencil-like instrument is inserted into the cervix and the low-voltage current is used as the physician carefully uses the wire loop to cut and cauterize abnormal tissue. LEEP is very effective at removing abnormal cells.

ARE THERE OTHER SIMILAR PROCEDURES?

LEEP is also called Loop Excision of the Transformation Zone (LLETZ).

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL RISKS?

Potential risks include significant bleeding that may require vaginal packing or a blood transfusion. Infection of the cervix could occur but is unusual. Scar tissue that could cause narrowing of the cervix can result in infertility. If a large piece of the cervix must be removed in order to remove the abnormal tissue, the patient can develop cervical incompetence--a condition that can lead to second trimester pregnancy loss.

WHAT ARE SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS AFTER THE PROCEDURE?

Patients will experience cramping for several hours following LEEP. A brownish-black vaginal discharge is normal, but heavy bleeding or bleeding that lasts longer than one week is not. Patients should avoid strenuous activity, sexual intercourse, douching, or tampon use for several weeks after the procedure. If a fever, chills, pelvic pain, or yellowish vaginal discharge develops--a physician should be consulted immediately.

THOMAS G. STOVALL, M.D.

Dr. Stovall is a Clinical Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center in Memphis, Tennessee and Partner of Women's Health Specialists, Inc.

Date Published: 2004-03-04

Health Information Provided by Women's Health Specialists

7800 Wolf Trail Cove, Germantown, TN 38138, (901) 682-9222, www.whsobgyn.com

This information is for educational purposes only. It does not represent comprehensive coverage of the topics addressed and is not a substitute for direct consultation with your health care provider. Always consult a health care provider regarding your specific condition. Trademarks referred to are the property of their respective owners.