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# **GUIDE**

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## **LEEP treatment (Loop Electrosurgical Excision Procedure)**



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***Disclaimer***

*This is general information developed by The Ottawa Hospital. It is not intended to replace the advice of a qualified healthcare provider. Please consult your own personal physician who will be able to determine the appropriateness of the information for your specific situation.*

*Prepared by the outpatient Gynecology/  
Oncology Clinic Nursing Staff of  
The Ottawa Hospital – Shirley E.  
Greenberg Women’s Health Centre,  
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# Introduction

This booklet will give you a better understanding of LEEP (Loop Electrosurgical Excision Procedure). It will discuss the care you will receive before, during and after the procedure.

As you read the booklet, note any questions that come to mind. There is a blank page at the end of the booklet for this purpose. Please discuss with your physician or nurse any questions or concerns you may have.

## What is a LEEP Treatment?

Loop Electrosurgical Excision Procedure is designed to treat and/or diagnose women who have had abnormal pap test results and/or biopsy of the cervix. LEEP is the cutting and coagulation of abnormal tissue in the cervix. LEEP uses an electric current that passes through a thin wire loop and acts like a scalpel (surgical knife) to cut away a thin layer of surface cells from the cervix.

## Why do I need LEEP?

Your physician has recommended this treatment because your recent Pap test or biopsies showed abnormal cells (dysplasia) on your cervix. This does not mean that you have cancer. However, the detection and treatment of this abnormal tissue is important to prevent the development of cervical cancer in later

years. Removal of the lesion allows for normal cell growth. Ten to fifteen percent of women require more than one LEEP treatment.

## **Where is LEEP done?**

LEEP is scheduled as an outpatient appointment in the Gynecology-Oncology Clinic at the Shirley E Greenberg Women's Health Centre. The clinic is located on the 7th floor of the Riverside Campus of the Ottawa Hospital, 1967 Riverside Drive. The clinic telephone number is 738-8400 ext. 81723

## **How long does LEEP take?**

The procedure only takes about 10 minutes. Allow yourself approximately one hour from arrival to discharge for preparation and post-treatment observation.

## **How do I prepare for LEEP?**

No special preparation is required. However, it is important to eat and drink normally before the procedure. To prevent abdominal cramping, two tablets of a non-aspirin, over-the-counter pain reliever such as ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) or acetaminophen (Tylenol) may be used (assuming you have no allergies). We also suggest that you bring someone with you to the appointment, and that you do not drive yourself home.

# What if I am menstruating?

If you are menstruating, the treatment can be done if the amount of bleeding is moderate or light. However, if you are having a very heavy flow, call us and we will reschedule your LEEP appointment.

## What will happen to me...

### ***Before LEEP?***

In the pre-treatment room, your nurse will review your basic history and allergy status. She will take your blood pressure and pulse, review the treatment and will ask you to sign a consent form. Please bring a complete listing of your current medications.

The nurse will ask you to undress from the waist down. She will give you a sheet, gown, and slippers.

### ***During LEEP?***

After the initial preparation, your nurse will accompany you into the treatment room and ask you to lie on the examining table. Your feet will be placed in stirrups as for a vaginal exam. In addition to the physician and nurse, a medical student, nursing student, or resident may be present during the procedure. The nurse will place an adhesive pad on your upper thigh. This is a safety measure used with electrical equipment. The nurse and physician may wear a surgical mask during this procedure. The physician will then insert a

speculum into your vagina so that the cervix can be seen.

First the physician will cleanse your cervix. Then she/he will inject a medication to freeze your cervix and to control bleeding. Normal side effects of this medication include: “heart racing”, a warm flush over the body, slight tingling of the face, ringing in the ears, and/or tremor of the limbs. However, any of these side effects will only last 1–2 minutes and vary with each patient.

You will remain awake during the procedure and may feel a dull ache or cramps in the lower abdomen.

Once the freezing has taken effect, the physician will proceed to remove the lesion. You will hear noise coming from the LEEP machine that sounds like a vacuum. Depending on the size of lesion, the excision will take from 10–15 seconds. The physician will remove the lesion and stop any bleeding that occurs. She/he may apply a medicated paste on your cervix. This will come out a few days after the procedure as a greenish-black discharge that may have an unusual odour (like copper or iron).

The specimens of tissue will be sent to the lab to ensure that the abnormal cells have all been removed.

## ***After LEEP?***

After the treatment you will return to the pre-treatment room where you can rest until you are ready to leave. This usually only requires a few minutes. The nurse will give you towelettes and a sanitary napkin and

will measure your blood pressure and pulse before you leave. You will also be given an appointment for follow up.

## **What can I expect after LEEP?**

Following the procedure you may experience:

- Mild lower abdominal cramps
- Vaginal bleeding: The amount of discharge varies from one patient to another. It can vary from a scant amount to having to change your sanitary napkin every 3–4 hours. The bleeding may start immediately after the procedure or be delayed for 1–2 weeks. It can last up to 4 weeks.
- Some greenish, brownish/black discharge (from the medicated paste) that can last a few days. It may have an unusual odour like iron or copper. Some women do not experience any discharge at all.

### ***Call your physician or go to Emergency for:***

- bleeding heavier than your normal menstrual flow, that is if you have to change your sanitary napkin every hour for 4 hours in a row, and/or if you have moderate to heavy flow that continues longer than your normal period.
- very heavy bleeding with clots
- an elevated temperature (higher than 38°C/99.4°F)
- severe abdominal pain



# Are there restrictions after LEEP Treatment?

You may shower or have a quick, shallow bath the same day and resume most of your activities the following day. You can begin exercising again in 1–2 weeks but should stop if bleeding other than normal menstruation occurs. If excessive bleeding occurs, you should call your physician.

For three weeks you should **not**:

- have intercourse
- insert anything into the vagina (including tampons, vaginal douches) unless you have been given a prescription for a vaginal cream
- lift heavy objects (greater than 20 lbs/10 kg)
- do strenuous exercise (activity that increases your heart rate for an extended period)
- soak in a hot tub or bath, use bubblebath or swim in a public pool or body of water

It takes about 3 weeks for your cervix to heal. These activities may increase your risk of bleeding and/or infection.

After this procedure your next 2–3 menstrual periods may be longer or heavier than usual, and possibly preceded by a dark brown pre-menstrual discharge. Also, you may experience more cramping. Most women who have undergone this procedure do not

report any significant discomfort. To relieve abdominal cramping, a non-aspirin, over-the-counter pain reliever such as ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) or acetaminophen (Tylenol) may be used.

LEEP does not affect fertility, your ability to have children or your ability to have sex.

## **Follow up care**

You must return in 6 months for a repeat Pap test and colposcopy exam. This is to ensure that the LEEP removed the abnormal cells from your cervix and that they have not recurred. You must return for follow up every 6–9 months until you have 2 negative examinations in a row. The clinic physician will advise you when you can return to your family doctor for your annual Pap test.

If you have another abnormal pap test at any time you will be re-referred to the Colposcopy Clinic for re-evaluation.

