

Title: Cone Biopsy

What is the procedure/operation/treatment that I am to have?

A cone biopsy is a procedure where a small piece of tissue in the shape of a cone is removed from the cervix (see diagram)

Why do I need it?

It is likely that you have had a test called a colposcopy after having an abnormal smear. The abnormal cells on the cervix (neck of the womb) are removed to be looked at by a pathologist to determine their exact nature. The aim is to completely remove all the abnormal cells so that no further treatment is required.

What benefits are there to having it?

Its benefit is to remove abnormal cells from the cells from cervix by way of a minor day case procedure.

Are there any alternatives?

There is no alternative to cone biopsy. A similar procedure is LLETZ where a smaller area of tissue is removed and thus not an appropriate treatment for you.

What risks are there?

There is a slight risk of having an anaesthetic and you will have a pre-operative assessment prior to surgery to minimise the risk of complications

There is a slight risk of heavy bleeding from the biopsy site. If the bleeding is very excessive it may be necessary to examine you under a second anaesthetic to treat this. Very rarely it may be necessary to perform a hysterectomy if the bleeding cannot be stopped.

There is a slight risk of developing an infection to the biopsy site and requiring antibiotics. If an offensive smelling discharge occurs and/or abdominal pains then we advise that you see your GP for treatment.

Rarely the cervix heals up so well that it closes off the opening for the menstrual 'period' blood to flow through. This can be easily opened by undergoing a small procedure.

There is a small increase in the incidence of preterm labour in women having had a cone biopsy.

What side effects might there be?

Your first period after the cone biopsy may seem heavier than normal. This is normal.

Do I need any preparation before I come for the procedure / operation / treatment?

As with any general anaesthetic you will need to fast for a minimum of six hours prior to the surgery. Drinking water is allowed up to two hours before the surgery. This will be discussed at your pre-op assessment. You should shower prior to admission. Nail polish and jewellery should be removed prior to the surgery.

What sort of anaesthetic will I have?

The cone biopsy is performed by using a general anaesthetic.

What will happen when I arrive for the procedure/operation/treatment and who will I meet?

The procedure will be performed either in the Day Care Unit or the gynaecology ward. You will be greeted by a member of staff, who will show you round the environment, complete the admission process, apply a wristband on you with your personal details and ensure you are fully prepared for theatre. You will probably see the doctor who is performing the operation and given the opportunity to ask questions. You will be seen by the anaesthetist to ensure you are the fit for the anaesthetic.

Will I need to sign a consent form or give verbal consent?

You will be asked to sign a written consent form prior to the surgery.

What does the procedure involve? How long does it last? What does it feel like?

The operation is performed vaginally just like the smear and colposcopy. You should have no visible scars. The procedure takes approximately ten minutes and you will not feel anything due to the anaesthetic. You may have a 'pack' inserted into the vagina temporarily acting as a pressure dressing. This will be removed before you go home. You may have slight period type pains after the procedure and simple painkillers such as Paracetamol can be taken to relieve this.

What happens after the procedure?

After the procedure you will be assisted from theatre into bed. The nurse caring for you will observe for any excessive vaginal bleeding and check for a 'pack'. She will complete a check of your blood pressure, pulse, temperature and breathing to ensure you are recovering from the anaesthetic. You will then be allowed to sleep. When you waken you will be allowed to eat and drink. If you have a pack the nurse will inform you when it will be removed and when you are expected fit for discharge. You can expect a light to moderate blood loss for a few days after the operation and a discharge that can last for a few weeks. You will be encouraged to mobilise and the nurse will ensure you can pass urine. Occasionally a catheter is inserted into the bladder if the pack needs to stay in place for several hours. If so this is usually removed alongside the pack.

How long will I need to stay in hospital?

You will usually only stay in hospital for up to 6 hours after the procedure, longer if the consultant feels is necessary.

When I go home will I need someone with me or have any special equipment?

Anyone having an anaesthetic requires the support of someone for 24hrs afterwards as they may still feel slightly drowsy. Driving is not safe within 24hrs. You will require a supply of sanitary towels.

Will I need any particular care at home? Do I need any follow up care and/or to see my GP?

You should receive the results from the cone biopsy within four weeks and your follow up care explained. It is important that you have regular smears. Under normal circumstances your first smear test will be performed in Women's Health Care about six months after your operation.

There is a possibility that the cone biopsy may not completely have removed the abnormal cells. If this is the case then this will be explained to you and further treatment may be offered.

What can go wrong once I'm home? Are there any signs I should look for and what should I do?

Heavy bleeding should be reported to the hospital contact number. Any offensive discharge should be reported to your GP.

When can I start my normal activities again?

Most women feel well enough to return to work and normal activities within one to two weeks. We advise that you refrain from penetrative sexual activity for up to six weeks following a cone biopsy to allow healing and reduce the risk of infection. For this reason we advise that you do not use tampons. Swimming should be avoided for two weeks.

It is known that abnormal changes on the cervix are affected by cigarette smoking. We strongly advise all women to stop smoking. Support in stopping smoking is available for all patients. Please ask for more information.

Who can I contact if I have more questions?

If you have any further questions or require advice please contact us on:-

Women's Health care - 01204 390390 ext 4861 (0830-1700)

M1 Ward – 01204 390718 (24 hour number)

Where can I find more information such as support groups and websites?

Several websites have helpful information on cone biopsy :-

www.cancerhelp.org.uk

www.macmillan.org.uk

www.jostrust.org.uk

We recognise that not everyone will find this document easy to read. We can arrange for large print, audio tape versions and for summaries or explanations in other languages. Please call 01204 390825 if we can help.

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