

Cold Coagulation Treatment

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Reasons for procedure

Cold coagulation may be performed on women who have delicate soft cells on their cervix which bleed easily when touched (these women do not necessarily have an abnormality on their cervix).

Cold coagulation is also used to treat women with abnormal cells on their cervix (neck of the womb) by destroying the abnormal cells with a heated probe. It is only suitable for some women and the doctor or nurse caring for you will have decided if it is the right treatment for you and your particular condition.

The procedure cauterises (burns) the soft cells so that they become hardened and less likely to bleed when touched.

Nature of the procedure

- Coagulation means touching your cervix with a small heated metal disc. The disc is usually applied for 20- 30 seconds. During this time you will feel a period type of pain. If you want to take your own painkiller before you attend this is perfectly acceptable.
- Although most patients tolerate this procedure quite well you may if you wish have a local anaesthetic. This will be discussed with you at the time.
- Following coagulation you will experience a heavy watery discharge that can last for 4 weeks and at times be blood stained.
- You are advised **not to** wear tampons for this discharge/bleeding and no sexual intercourse until the discharge/bleeding has stopped.
- If your loss becomes excessive or offensive please use the enclosed phone numbers for advice.

Are there any alternatives?

If you are having the procedure to treat bleeding from the soft cells on your cervix, cauterisation (superficial destruction) of your cervical ectopy (erosion) under a general anaesthetic is an alternative.

The other treatment available is only suitable for women with an abnormality on their cervix. This is called a loop excision. There is a separate information leaflet for this procedure.

You may also decide to monitor your symptoms without any treatment.

Consequences of not having the procedure

Conservative management for post coital bleeding means that the cells on the cervix rejuvenate in time and this problem then reduces and stops.

How can I prepare for the cold coagulation procedure?

If you are having a local anaesthetic, you can carry on as normal before the procedure. It is important that you eat and drink before the procedure and do not starve yourself.

You may like to bring someone with you to take you home after the procedure, but it is not essential.

Although it is very uncommon to have a cold coagulation under a general anaesthetic, it is occasionally done. If you are having the general anaesthetic, we will give you instructions in your admission letter about when you need to start fasting (stop eating and drinking certain liquids) depending on the time of your operation. Fasting means that you cannot eat or drink anything (except water) for six hours before surgery. We will give you clear instructions on when to start fasting. It is important to follow these instructions. If there is food or liquid in your stomach during the anaesthetic it could come up to the back of your throat and damage your lungs.

I am going on holiday, what should I do?

If you are planning to go abroad and we have sent you an appointment for treatment, please call us to let us know. We would normally suggest that you do not travel abroad for at least two weeks following the treatment. This is because of the risk of bleeding and other complications.

Giving my consent (permission)

We want to involve you in all the decisions about your care and treatment. If you decide to go ahead in the outpatient clinic, you will be asked to give written consent to the procedure. This states that you agree to have the treatment and you understand what it involves.

Remember, it is your decision. You can change your mind at any time (as long as this is before the doctor or nurse has actually started the treatment procedure) even if you have signed the consent form. Let staff know immediately if you change your mind. Your wishes will be respected at all times. If you would like more information about our consent process, please speak to a member of staff caring for you.

What happens before and during the cold coagulation procedure?

You will have a consultation with the colposcopist. You will be taken to the examination area where you will be asked to undress from the waist down (a loose skirt does not need to be removed). The nurse who will be looking after you and assisting the colposcopist will then help you to get into a comfortable position on the examination couch.

The procedure usually takes between 15-20 minutes. During the examination an instrument called a speculum is inserted into your vagina to hold back the vaginal walls so the clinician is able to see your cervix. The colposcopist then uses the colposcope to examine your cervix. They may then apply some liquid to the cervix to show any abnormal looking areas.

If having a local anaesthetic, once this has taken effect, the colposcopist will proceed with the treatment. You may feel a sharp scratch and stinging sensation when the local anaesthetic is being inserted around your cervix.

They will use a heated probe on the cervix. This will be positioned in one place for between 20-30 seconds. This application may be repeated a number of times and the probe may be repositioned to ensure all affected areas of the cervix are treated.

Will I feel any pain?

If you have a local anaesthetic, you should not feel any pain during the procedure, although you may feel some pressure on your cervix.

It is not unusual to feel discomfort after the treatment. You may experience a mild period-like pain – if this occurs, we advise that you take your normal pain-relieving medication.

What are the risks?

Bleeding:

It is normal to have some light bleeding and discharge for up to four weeks following the treatment to your cervix. Initially we would expect you to have a dirty looking discharge (you will see this on your sanitary pad). This will be from the iodine used before the treatment, as well as possibly some greyish looking specks from the area we treat.

You may also have a yellow coloured discharge from the paste that we apply to help stop bleeding. All of this is to be expected. You may experience a very watery, blood-stained discharge, which is produced from the area of your cervix we have treated. It is similar to having a burn on your hand which weeps as it heals. Heavy bleeding is not expected.

In the unlikely event that you have heavy bleeding, which is heavier than your normal period, or if you are passing blood clots, we would advise you to attend the Emergency Department (A&E) at Whiston Hospital, or your nearest Emergency Department.

If you need further advice please contact the Colposcopy Unit on **01744 646301** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

Infection:

If you have a vaginal discharge which has an offensive (bad) smell, a fever or severe ongoing lower abdominal (tummy) pain it may indicate that you have an infection. Please go to your GP, who may prescribe you antibiotics.

If you are still bleeding after four weeks, please call the Colposcopy Unit (details at end of the leaflet) as this may be a sign of infection. We may advise you to go to your GP for an examination of your cervix.

Stenosis (narrowing) of the cervical os (the small opening of the cervix):

Following cold coagulation to your cervix there is a small risk (less than two out of every 100 women) that the cervical Os may close over. You can help prevent this by allowing your period to come as normal following the procedure. If you take a 21 day contraceptive pill this means that you should not run two packs together; instead you should make sure you leave a week (the seven day break) between finishing one pack and starting another.

I have a coil fitted, what happens now?

If you have a coil (IUCD or IUD) or Mirena® (IUS) fitted, the clinician may take it out at the time of your treatment if they think it necessary. In many cases we are able to leave it in place.

A coil can be refitted four weeks after your treatment. The best time to fit your new coil will have to be agreed with your GP/family planning clinic.

You should use an additional method of contraception (such as a condom) as well as the coil, or not have sexual intercourse, for seven days before your planned procedure.

What if I am pregnant?

It is **not** possible for us to undertake surgery on your cervix if you are pregnant. In order to ensure that you are not pregnant on the day of your surgery we ask that you have protected sexual intercourse leading up to your operation date. We will also ask you about dates of your last period. If there is any chance you are pregnant, please inform the doctor or nurse seeing you. They may perform a pregnancy test on you which will be done by testing a sample of urine.

If you are pregnant when you are due to have the procedure, we will defer your treatment until after you have had your baby (please let us know your expected date of delivery when you come to see us).

If you are having the cold coagulation to treat abnormal cells, the doctor or nurse looking after you **may** want to monitor the abnormal cells throughout your pregnancy.

They will do this by asking you to come for another colposcopy while you are pregnant, but this does not harm your baby. You will also be asked to come back to the Colposcopy Unit 12 weeks after the birth of your baby so that we can have another look at your cervix. We may also carry out the treatment at this time.

Will the treatment affect my ability to have a baby?

The treatment should not affect your ability to become pregnant. Cold coagulation has not been associated with any increased risk of having a premature birth.

What happens after the procedure?

If you have had a local anaesthetic, we ask you to stay in the department for about 20 minutes after the procedure. During this time a nurse will check on you and will go through the instruction leaflet and answer any questions you may have. We advise that you bring someone with you, so that they can take you home following the procedure. You can eat and drink as normal.

What do I need to do after I go home?

We advise that you go home after the procedure and rest for the remainder of the day. If you have had a local anaesthetic, you should be able to go to work the following day. If your appointment is late in the afternoon, you may wish to book the following day off work.

You do not need to stay in bed the following day, but we would advise that you have a restful day. Ideally, we would recommend that you have someone staying with you for the first 24 hours.

With both the local and general anaesthetic, we recommend that you return to work depending on how you feel, taking into consideration the demands of your job. You should be able to self-certify a sick certificate for seven days. Please avoid any heavy lifting (at home or at work) for the next two weeks.

We recommend that you avoid swimming until the vaginal discharge has stopped, ideally for at least four weeks. If you attend the gym, please refrain from going for two weeks following your procedure, after which you can slowly build up going again. If you start to bleed during/following a gym session, please avoid going for a further week.

When you get your menstrual period, only use sanitary towels. Do not use tampons or have sexual intercourse for four weeks after your treatment. This allows time for the cervix to heal and reduces the risk of infection and bleeding.

You can bathe as normal following your treatment. We would advise you to shower where possible; however, if you do not have access to a shower, please have a warm bath (not hot).

What should I do if I have a problem?

If you have any concerns following your treatment please do not hesitate to contact the Colposcopy Unit (details at end of leaflet).

Will I have a follow-up appointment?

If you have had cold coagulation to treat an abnormality on your cervix, it is very important that you have your first cervical cytology test (smear) and Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) test six months after your treatment. These may be done in your GP practice. You will be informed of this at the time of your cold coagulation appointment.

If you have had cold coagulation to treat the soft cells on your cervix, we may discharge you after the treatment. We will also inform you at the time of your appointment when you need to have your next cervical cytology test.

Further information


The websites below are run by cancer charities, but this does not mean that you have cancer. These websites are the ones we believe have the most detailed information which we hope may help you to answer more of your questions.

- www.cancerhelp.org.uk
- www.macmillan.org.uk
- www.jostrust.org.uk
- www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk/cervical
- www.bsccp.org.uk

Please note this treatment cannot be done whilst on a period. If you are experiencing irregular or abnormal bleeding please contact the clinic for advice on 01744 646301

If you are unable to attend for your appointment please telephone the clinic in advance so that your appointment can be given to someone else

**If you have any urgent problems out of clinic hours
Please contact ward 3E on
0151 430 1522**



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