

# Cervical Ectopy

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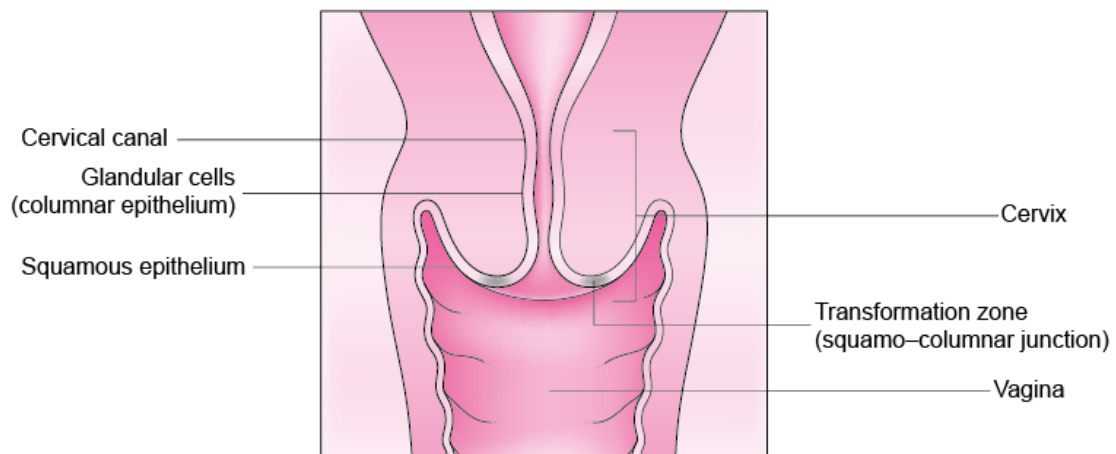
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**Document Number:** MWL1383  
**Version:** 2  
**Review date:** 01 / 07 / 2026

## What is a cervical ectopy?

The cervix is the lowest part of the uterus (womb). There are 2 types of cells found here:

- Squamous cells, which cover the outer part of the cervix (tough cells)
- Columnar cells which line the inside of the cervix (delicate cells)

At the opening to the cervix these types of cells meet in an area called the squamo-columnar junction (SCJ). A cervical ectopy happens when the inner lining of the cervical canal comes out onto the outer surface of the cervix. It can be seen during a speculum examination and appears red and velvet like. This is because the columnar cells are much thinner than squamous cells and the underlying blood vessels show through more easily.



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## What causes it?

Ectopy is related to the female hormone oestrogen and is common in young girls and occurs in pregnancy and in women taking the oral contraceptive pill.

It is not related to cervical cancer.

## What symptoms does it cause?

It may cause large amounts of vaginal discharge. Occasionally it can cause bleeding between periods and after sexual intercourse. If you have any abnormal bleeding you should always seek advice from a Doctor as soon as possible.

## Is it serious?

No. Often a cervical ectopy has no symptoms at all, and is only discovered during a routine smear test.

## Can it be treated?

Yes, there are two treatments available. However, treatment is not always necessary.

- Silver nitrate to cauterise the cells. This is not painful and will cause mild discomfort. This can cause some spotting or discharge as well as some period type pain for around 1 week.
- Cold coagulation which uses heat to cauterise the cells. The cervix will need to be fully assessed prior to treatment, where a small biopsy may be taken. You will not require any anaesthesia as you should only experience mild discomfort. Following treatment you will experience a watery discharge for 4-6 weeks. Tampons, swimming and sexual intercourse should be avoided during this time.

These treatments will usually alleviate symptoms, although they may recur.


Please discuss these options with your Doctor or nurse for more information.



**We cannot stress enough the importance of your continued attendance at the St Helens Colposcopy Unit.**

**Contact us**  
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