

Fact Sheet

Cone biopsy of the cervix

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A Cone biopsy is a simple procedure where a small part of the cervix (neck of the womb) is removed.

When is a Cone biopsy recommended?

- When several Pap smears have shown changes but your colposcopy is normal. The cell changes may be too deep in the cervix to be seen with the colposcope.
- If the Pap smear has shown changes in the 'gland cells' of the cervix. This type of cell also lies deep in the cervix.
- If your doctor is concerned that you have a very early cervix cancer.

What is the difference between a Cone biopsy and a LLETZ (Large Loop Excision of the Transformation Zone)?

- A **LLETZ** (also called LEEP) procedure removes abnormal cervix cells using a hot wire loop or laser
- A **Cone biopsy** removes abnormal cells using a scalpel (surgical knife)

A cone biopsy ensures you have a correct diagnosis and the treatment has been enough.

Are there risks with a Cone biopsy?

This small operation is considered safe; however no operation is without risk.

A Cone biopsy has been recommended to prevent you from developing cancer, or to treat an early cancer, so the benefits of the surgery are greater than the risks.

Risks that could happen with any surgery are extremely rare (less than 1 in 500) with Cone biopsy:

- Anaesthetic problems
- Infection of the cervix, bladder or lungs which may need antibiotic treatment
- Clots in the legs (deep vein thrombosis DVT) and lungs (pulmonary embolism PE)

Risks of Cone biopsy surgery:

- Bleeding from the cervix can happen during surgery or a few days after the operation. Rarely (less than 1% of cases) bleeding is heavy enough to need blood transfusion and/or stitching in the operating theatre.
- In less than 2% of cases, the cervix heals with scarring leading to narrowing of the cervix. This may make periods more painful or stop the cervix dilating (opening up) normally during labour.
- In less than 5% of cases, the cervix is weakened by the Cone biopsy and opens too early during pregnancy. This may lead to miscarriage or prematurity (when your baby is born too early). Women who have had a Cone biopsy sometimes have a stitch placed in the cervix early in pregnancy which may prevent problems.
- Very rarely having had a Cone biopsy can affect fertility (your chances of falling pregnant).

If you are pregnant and have previously had a cone biopsy, you need to let your obstetrician or the staff at the hospital clinic know at your first antenatal visit (preferably before you are 14 weeks pregnant).

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What should I expect during a Cone biopsy?

The Cone biopsy is done under a general anaesthetic (you will be asleep) and you will be admitted to the Day Stay ward on the day of the procedure.

The hospital will give instructions about the date of your procedure and what time to arrive. You are asked to fast (not eat) for 6 hours and not to drink for 2 hours before the procedure.

During the Cone biopsy, a small wedge shape of cervix is removed and stitches are placed to stop any bleeding.

After the procedure, you are taken to the recovery ward where nurses will check your vital signs (pulse and blood pressure) and give you pain relief if you need it. It is normal to experience mild crampy pain, like a period, and light vaginal bleeding after the procedure.

You will usually be able to go home after a couple of hours. You should be able to walk around, have passed urine (done a wee), and have had something to eat and drink before leaving.

Please arrange for someone to drive you home, as you are not allowed to drive for 24 hours after an anaesthetic. (Some insurance companies request longer – check your policy).

We welcome further feedback on this brochure as a way of continually improving our service.

Please send your feedback to:

WSLHD-Get_Involved@health.nsw.gov.au

What should I expect after the Cone biopsy?

Most women feel fine after the procedure and are able to go back to work the next day but we recommend avoiding strenuous activity, particularly heavy lifting, for the first week.

Light vaginal bleeding or discharge for 7-10 days after the procedure is normal. If the bleeding becomes heavier than a period, or smells bad, you should contact your local doctor, your gynaecologist, the hospital clinic or the hospital emergency department.

You may feel mild crampy lower stomach pain similar to period pain for a day or two. Taking two Panadol™ tablets four times a day is helpful for the pain.

For 6 weeks after the cone biopsy:

- do not use tampons
- do not use vaginal douches
- do not have sex

The results of your Cone biopsy should be available after about 1-2 weeks.

Usually the clinic will call you with the results in 2 weeks. Contact us if you have not heard from the clinic.

Please ensure that you have a follow up appointment arranged at the clinic.

Clinic phone: (02) 8890-6508