LEEP (Loop Electrosurgical Excision Procedure)

LEEP (loop electrosurgical excision procedure) is the removal of a piece of the cervix, which is the neck of the womb (*uterus*). Electricity is passed through a thin wire loop, which cuts and seals the area from bleeding where tissue is being removed. The procedure is done on women with abnormal changes in their cervical cells discovered during a pap smear. Often these abnormal changes can lead to cancer if left in place and remain untreated. Women with high-grade changes representing very disorganized areas (*dysplasia*) of tissue in the cervix are often the best candidates for this procedure. LEEP is also done on patients with cervicitis (inflammation of the cervix). This is a condition that causes a large amount of abnormal vaginal discharge but is not precancerous.

LEEP is not done on women who have cancer that has already invaded the cervix, on pregnant women or during a menstrual period.

BEFORE THE PROCEDURE:

- **Do not** take aspirin or blood thinners for one week before the procedure, or as told by your caregiver.
- Eat a light and bland meal before the procedure.
- Let your caregiver know if you develop a fever or vaginal infection before the procedure.
- **Do not** smoke for a 2 to 3 days before the procedure.
- Arrive to the caregiver's office or clinic at least 30 minutes before the procedure to sign any necessary documents and to get prepared for the procedure.

LET YOUR CAREGIVE KNOW ABOUT:

- Allergies to foods or medications.
- All the medications you are taking including, over-the-counter, prescription, herbal, eye drops and creams.
- Taking illegal drugs.
- Consuming excessive alcohol.
- Previous problems with anesthetics including novocaine.
- Other medical or health problems.

RISKS & COMPLICATIONS

- Bleeding and infection. This does not occur very often and can usually easily be treated.
- Injury to the vagina, bladder or rectum.
- Bleeding after the procedure is normal and varies from light spotting for a week to a few days. Menstrual-like bleeding or bleeding that lasts a couple weeks calls for medical evaluation. You may also experience mild cramping.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort or fever as directed by your caregiver. **Do not** use aspirin as this may increase bleeding.
- Premature births from damage and weakening of the cervix.
- Severe closing of the cervical opening that causes problems during menstruation (*cervical stenosis*).

PROCEDURE

- LEEP only takes a few minutes. Often, it may be done in the office of your caregiver.
- The cervix is injected with a medicine (*local anesthetic*) that makes the area numb and decreases blood loss. Liquid iodine stain is applied to the cervix (if not allergic to iodine) to find the area of abnormal cells to be removed. The wire loop is then passed across the cervix. It removes the area between the outer and inner portion of the cervix (including the cervical canal), which is the zone most often containing the abnormal cell growth.

- The wire loop cuts and seals the cervical tissue from bleeding as it passes through. The size of the piece removed depends on the size of the wire loop and the area of abnormal cells.
- A paste is applied to the cut area of the cervix to help prevent bleeding.
- The tissue sample is then sent to the lab. It is examined under the microscope by a specialist (*pathologist*).

AFTER THE PROCEDURE:

- Have someone available to take you home after the procedure.
- You may have slight to moderate cramping.
- There may be black discharge from the vagina from the paste used on the cervix to prevent bleeding. This is normal.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- **Do not** drive for 24 hours.
- No tampons, douching or intercourse for two weeks or until your caregiver approves.
- Rest at home for 24 hours. You may then resume normal activities unless advised otherwise by your caregiver.
- Take your temperature two times a day, for 4 days. Write the temperatures down on paper.
- Take medications your caregiver has ordered and as directed.
- Keep all your follow-up appointments and Pap smears as recommended by your caregiver.
- Not all results are available during your visit. Do not assume everything is normal if you have not heard from your caregiver or the medical facility. It is important for you to follow up on all of your tests.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Bleeding is heavier than a normal menstrual cycle or you have blood clots.
- An oral temperature above 100º F (37.8º C) develops.
- You have increasing cramps or pain not relieved with medication, or you develop belly (*abdominal*) pain which does not seem to be related to the same area of earlier cramping and pain.
- You are light headed, unusually weak or have fainting episodes.
- You develop painful or bloody urination.
- You develop a bad smelling vaginal discharge.

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