




**Te Whatu Ora**  
Health New Zealand

# LLETZ Treatment of the Cervix (GA)



This information is for people who have been recommended to have a LLETZ (Large Loop Excision of the Transformation Zone) to remove abnormal cells from their cervix.

LLETZ is a method of treating the cervix quickly and comfortably. It removes the abnormal area with a diathermy loop (an electrical wire loop). The removed tissue is then sent to the laboratory to be examined.

## Why has a LLETZ been recommended?

A LLETZ is recommended when a biopsy (or sometimes several smear tests) show pre-cancer changes in the cells on the cervix. These are also called “high grade” changes. This is not cancer, but at least one in three people who have these changes will develop cervical cancer if not treated. The development of cancer from high grade changes usually takes several years, however if cancer develops, more extensive treatment is needed.

## Timing of treatment

A LLETZ treatment cannot be done during pregnancy or when you have your period. If you become pregnant or if your period is due at the time of your appointment, please contact the clinic to reschedule.

## Why is a general anaesthetic needed?

There are several different reasons why a general anaesthetic may be recommended instead of a local anaesthetic. These include previous difficulty with painful examinations, problems seeing the cervix in clinic, or a larger area needing to be treated. If you are unsure why, please ask your doctor.

## What does the treatment involve?

Your treatment will be in an operating theatre at either Greenlane Clinical Centre or Auckland City Hospital.

The theatre scheduler will give you instructions about the timing of your admission and will tell you what time you must not eat or drink anything after. Please make sure you follow these instructions, for your safety.

You will meet with your anaesthetist and surgeon (gynaecologist) on the day of the procedure.

Once you are anaesthetised (asleep) your surgeon will do a colposcopy like you had in clinic. They will then use a diathermy loop (a small wire loop that removes the affected tissue) to complete your procedure. This usually takes 5-10 minutes.

You will be taken to the recovery area until you are alert enough to go home.


## What to expect after treatment

You will need someone to drive you home. You will not be able to drive for 24 hours. It is usual to take two days off work (the day of the procedure plus the following day). If you need a medical certificate for your work, please let us know.

You may have a watery discharge and some bleeding as well. Sometimes the discharge contains dark flecks of tissue and may have a strong smell. This is part of the normal healing process and may last for up to three weeks. Your next period may be earlier or later than expected, and could be heavier than usual.

You may have mild cramps, similar to a period, for 1-2 days. Pain relief such as paracetamol (e.g. - Panadol™) and/or ibuprofen (e.g. - Nurofen™) can be taken and is usually sufficient.

The surgeon will write to you and your GP/Nurse/referrer, with the results from your LLETZ. These results can take up to a month to be available. The letter will also tell you the timing of your next cervical screening test.



To avoid heavy bleeding or infection of your healing cervix, we recommend the following for the next 4 weeks:

- No sexual intercourse
- Use pads (no tampons, no menstrual cups)
- Have a shower instead of a bath
- No swimming
- No spa pools
- No strenuous exercise for 2 weeks

Please contact us straight away if you experience the following after treatment:

- Bleeding that is heavy or has clots
- Pain in the lower abdomen or back aching that will not go away
- Feeling unwell (hot, cold, feverish)
- Feeling worried about your recovery



## Are there any risks?

All treatments have benefits and risks, however a LLETZ is generally a very safe and simple treatment. It usually only takes between 10-15 minutes, though the anaesthetic will take a little longer.

Some potential risks of LLETZ include:

- Bleeding – usually minimal but occasionally requires readmission and/or return to theatre if heavy.
- Infection – may require antibiotics.
- Repeat treatment – 2-5% of people will need a second treatment
- Preterm birth – Most people will have a normal pregnancy that carries to full term. Some people who have a LLETZ may have an increased chance of a future preterm (early) birth. Additional monitoring in the first half of pregnancy may help to prevent this, so it is important that a future Lead Maternity Carer (e.g. - midwife) is aware that you have had a LLETZ treatment.
- Cervical stenosis (scarring, narrowing) – this can make it more difficult to get an accurate smear test. It is more common after menopause. Dilation of the cervix may be needed.
- Rarely, there can be injury to the vaginal skin.



## Vaccination after LLETZ

Pre-cancer changes are caused by HPV (Human Papilloma Virus). The LLETZ treatment removes the abnormal cells but does not treat the virus. Most people (90%) will clear the virus themselves with their own immune system within 2 years.

There is some research showing that HPV vaccination after LLETZ treatment helps to reduce the chance of needing a second treatment, probably by helping the immune system to clear HPV. Vaccination for HPV is free until age 27-years. Ask your surgeon or nurse if you would like more information.

## Contact details

- **Colposcopy Clinic** (weekdays 8.00am - 4.00pm) 630 9811
- **Women's Assessment Unit** (After hours) 307 4949 and ask for the Women's Assessment Unit

Please ring to speak to a gynaecology nurse if you have any worries or questions about your treatment.

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