

Cervical Ectopy Patient Information Leaflet

Welcome to the Liverpool Women's Hospital Colposcopy department

What is cervical ectopy?

An ectopy is a common and normal finding on the cervix. It can also be called an ectropion, an erosion or an eversion. These words all mean the same thing. An ectopy is an area of soft delicate cells called glandular cells that are usually found on the inside of the canal leading to the womb. At certain times of life these cells move to the outside of the cervix. These delicate glandular cells look very different from the normal pale pink skin cells as they are red and soft. Being soft they can bleed easily especially when having a speculum examination, a smear or during sex. This bleeding does not mean they are abnormal.

How will know I have an ectopy?

An ectopy can be seen when you have a smear and can sometimes cause concern. If your smear is normal there is nothing to worry about. An ectopy is common and harmless. It is not linked to cervical cancer or any other condition that causes cancer. Sometimes you may be referred to the colposcopy clinic for a closer look if your practice nurse or GP is unsure.

What does an ectopy look like?



Normal Cervix
No ectopy



Normal Cervix
Small area of ectopy



Normal Cervix
Large area of ectopy

An ectopy is seen as an area of red cells around the os (opening to the womb). They can be a variety of sizes and shapes.

What causes ectopy?

A lot of people are born with cervical ectopy but it can be caused by hormonal changes. This means you are more likely to have it if you are:

- younger (under 30 years old)
- going through puberty
- pregnant
- taking the contraceptive pill.

What can I do about my ectopy?

You don't need to do anything as an ectopy is normal. They usually disappear by the menopause.

Stopping the pill can reduce the size of an ectopy after several months but it rarely disappears completely.

We do not need to treat a normal ectopy that doesn't cause symptoms as it is part of normal human biology. If an ectopy causes symptoms of bleeding with sex, it can be distressing; this can be treated with cold coagulation in the clinic which is also known as cautery. Before considering cold coagulation for ectopy we will need to take biopsies to confirm the tissue is normal. Sometimes this will stop the bleeding without the need for further treatment.

What are the risks during Cold Coagulation?

- 1 in 10 women will have bleeding and/or infection
- The treatment may not work
- Symptoms may return months later
- Narrowing (stenosis) to the opening to the cervix which may cause problems in labour or with taking future smears
- Rarely damage to vaginal tissues

Some Websites you may find useful:-

www.jostrust.org.uk/information/cervix/cervical-ectropion

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/colposcopy/treatment/>

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