

Cervical Polyps

A cervical polyp is a common benign growth on the surface of the cervical canal. It can cause irregular menstrual bleeding but often show no symptoms. Treatment consists of simple removal of the polyp and prognosis is generally good. About 1% of cervical polyps will show neoplastic change which may lead to cancer. They are most common in post-menstrual, pre-menopausal women who have been pregnant.

Causes, incidence, and risk factors

The cause of cervical polyps is not completely understood. They may occur with:

- An abnormal response to increased levels of the female hormone, estrogen
- Chronic inflammation
- Clogged blood vessels in the cervix

Cervical polyps are common, especially in women over age 20 who have had children. Polyps are rare in young women who have not started their period (menstruation).

Most women have only one polyp, but some women have two or three.

Symptoms

- Abnormally heavy periods (menorrhagia)
- Abnormal vaginal bleeding
 - After douching
 - After intercourse
 - After menopause
 - Between periods
- White or yellow mucus (leukorrhea)

Polyps may not cause symptoms.

Signs and tests

During a pelvic examination, the health care provider will see smooth, red or purple, fingerlike growths on the cervix. A cervical biopsy will most often show cells that are consistent with a benign polyp. Rarely there may be abnormal, precancerous, or cancer cells in a polyp.

Treatment

The health care provider can remove polyps during a simple, outpatient procedure. Gentle twisting of a cervical polyp may remove it. Larger polyps may require removal with electrocautery.

Although most cervical polyps are not cancerous (benign), the removed tissue should be sent to a laboratory and checked further.

Prognosis

Typically, polyps are not cancerous (benign) and are easy to remove. Polyps do not usually grow back. Women who have polyps are at risk of growing more polyps.

Complications

Some cervical cancers may first appear as a polyp. There may be bleeding and slight cramping for a few days after removal of a polyp.

Calling your health care provider

Call for an appointment if you have:

- Abnormal bleeding from the vagina
- Abnormal discharge from the vagina
- Abnormally heavy periods

Call your health care appointment to schedule regular gynecological exams and to determine how often you should receive a Pap smear .

Prevention

See your health care provider to treat infections as soon as possible.

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