

Cervical ectropion

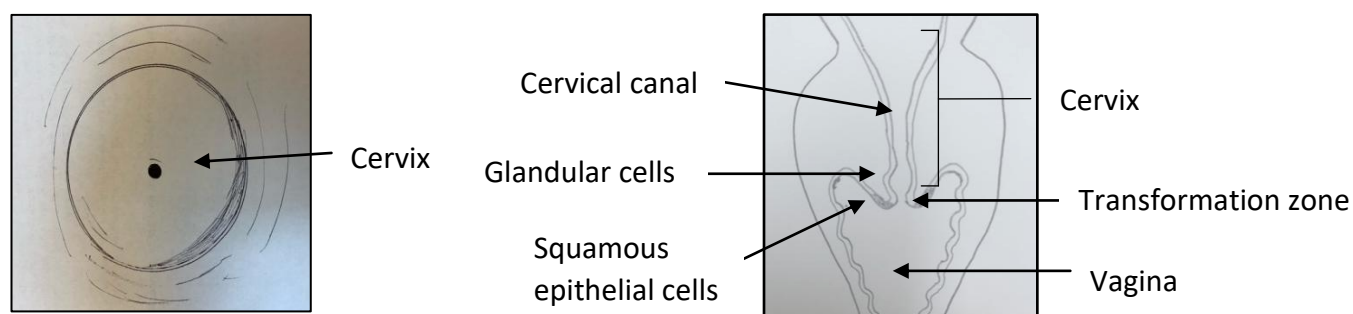
Information for patients



What is it?

You have been diagnosed with cervical ectropion (also known as cervical erosion or ectopy). This is common and harmless and is nothing to do with cervical cancer.

Ectropion happens when soft (glandular) cells that are found inside the cervix (neck of the womb) spread to the outside of the cervix where hard (epithelial) cells are usually found. These soft cells appear bright red in colour and can often be seen when your doctor or nurse looks into the vagina with a speculum (a device which helps medical professionals to see into the vagina).



How do you get it?

The most common cause is hormonal changes. Ectropion is more common if you are: younger, going through puberty, taking a contraceptive containing oestrogen (like the combined pill, patch or ring), or pregnant.

What are the symptoms?

Cervical ectropion does not cause any problem for most people.

The soft cells inside the cervix are more sensitive and produce more mucus than the harder cells on the outside of the cervix. As a result of this, some people can have light bleeding or blood-streaked discharge after sex. You may also have some light bleeding or discomfort during or after a cervical smear test.

What is the treatment?

As ectropion is a normal feature of the cervix, treatment is not usually needed. It is important that a healthcare professional examines your cervix to make sure it looks healthy. They will also offer you a smear test if this is due. Sometimes changing your contraception may help the ectropion to resolve more quickly.

In a few people, bleeding from an ectropion after sex or between periods keeps happening. If this is particularly troublesome, you may be offered a treatment known as 'cautery'.

Your doctor or nurse will put a speculum into your vagina to look at the cervix and touch the soft glandular cells with a long thin cotton bud with silver nitrate on it. This should not be painful but can feel warm or cold afterwards.

It is important to know that treatment does sometimes improve symptoms in the short term, but the ectropion often comes back.

What to expect after cautery treatment?

After silver nitrate treatment you may have some bleeding or grey coloured discharge. It usually takes about one week to heal after treatment. We advise that you avoid tampons, penetrative sex and swimming during this time.

If you are experiencing continuous bleeding, heavy bleeding, abdominal pain or smelly discharge this is unlikely due to cervical ectropion and you should seek medical advice.

