



[Home](#) → [Medical Encyclopedia](#) → Cervical polyps

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Cervical polyps

Cervical polyps are fingerlike growths on the lower part of the uterus that connects with the vagina (cervix).

Causes

The exact cause of cervical polyps is not known. 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. They are often found in women over age 40 who have had many children. Polyps are rare in young women who have not started having their period (menstruation).

Symptoms

Polyps do not always cause symptoms. When symptoms are present, they may include:

- Very heavy menstrual periods
- Vaginal bleeding after douching or intercourse
- Abnormal vaginal bleeding after menopause or between periods
- White or yellow mucus (leukorrhea)

Exams and Tests

Your health care provider will perform a pelvic exam. Some smooth, red or purple fingerlike growths will be seen on the cervix.

Most often, the provider will remove the polyp with a gentle tug and send it for testing (biopsy). Most of the time, the biopsy will show cells that are consistent with a benign polyp. Rarely, there may be abnormal, precancerous, or cancer cells in a polyp.

Treatment

The provider can remove polyps during a simple outpatient procedure.

- Smaller polyps may be removed with gentle twisting.

- Electrocautery may be needed to remove larger polyps.

The removed polyp tissue should be sent to a lab for further tests.

Outlook (Prognosis)

Most polyps are not cancerous (benign) and are easy to remove. Polyps do not grow back most of the time. Women who have polyps are at risk of growing more polyps.

Possible Complications

There may be bleeding and slight cramping for a few days after removal of a polyp. Some cervical cancers may first appear as a polyp. Certain uterine polyps may be associated with uterine cancer.

When to Contact a Medical Professional

Contact your provider if you have:

- Abnormal bleeding from the vagina, including bleeding after sex or between periods
- Abnormal discharge from the vagina
- Abnormally heavy periods
- Bleeding or spotting after menopause

Contact your provider to schedule regular gynecological exams. Ask how often you should receive a Pap test.

Prevention

See your provider to treat infections as soon as possible.

Alternative Names

Vaginal bleeding - polyps

References

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