Cervical polyps

Patient information

Key messages for this pathway

Background information

Cervical polyps

Are there associated symptoms?

Asymptomatic

Symptoms present

Removal of asymptomatic polyps is almost always unnecessary

Send polyp for histological examination

Reassure patient

Is the patient post menopausal?

Removal of polyps

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1  Background information

Quick info:
Cervical polyps are most common benign neoplasm of the cervix. They are almost always found in women over the age of 20 who have had children, and in peri-menopausal women. Their cause is not completely understood. They are usually solitary, but up to 3 may be seen. A retrospective analysis of 1366 cervical polyps showed that none had malignant features and 67% were removed from asymptomatic women. A policy of removing only cervical polyps from symptomatic women or those with abnormal cervical cytology and limiting histological examination to these polyps would result in significant savings and reduce the small risk of morbidity associated with polypectomy.

Reference:

2  Patient information

Quick info:


3  Key messages for this pathway

Quick info:
This pathway has been locally developed for South West Hampshire.
Key messages for this pathway:
• many polyps are asymptomatic. They may be associated with symptoms, although they are not necessarily the cause of the symptoms
• removal of asymptomatic polyps is almost always unnecessary
• if a polyp is discovered in a post menopausal woman, then pelvic ultrasound is indicated

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4  Cervical polyps

Quick info:
Cervical polyps consist of an overgrowth of the endocervical columnar epithelium and are usually solitary although a small number may coexist. More rarely a submucosal uterine fibroid on a long pedicle may be extruded through the cervical canal.

5  Is the patient post menopausal?

Quick info:
There is an association between cervical polyps and endometrial polyps, particularly in post menopausal women (up to 57% of cases). If a polyp is discovered in a post menopausal woman, then pelvic ultrasound is indicated.

6  Are there associated symptoms?

Quick info:
Cervical polyps
Obstetrics and Gynaecology > Gynaecology > Cervical polyps

Many polyps are asymptomatic. However, they may be associated with symptoms (although they are not necessarily the cause of the symptoms).
Symptoms include:
• menorrhagia
• abnormal vaginal bleeding
  • after douching
  • after intercourse
• post menopausal
• intermenstrual
• leukorrhea (white or yellow mucus)

7 Asymptomatic
Quick info:
Cervical polyps are common coincidental findings in women undergoing cervical screening.
If they are not associated with symptoms, they are almost always benign.

8 Symptoms present
Quick info:
Where a cervical polyp is suspected as the source of bleeding or discharge, it should be removed and sent for histology.

10 Removal of polyps
Quick info:
Removal of a cervical polyp up to 2cm long by 1cm wide is a simple painless procedure requiring little skill. It is not associated with significant bleeding and can be easily done in primary care.
Assuming this is a coincidental finding a vaginal speculum will already be in place:
• if the intention was to take a cervical smear this should now be performed
• the vaginal speculum may be replaced with a self-retaining one thus freeing up the examiner
• the polyp should be grasped with a polypectomy forceps and twisted several times. The polyp can now be pulled upon and avulsed. The vaginal speculum should be removed. Make sure to use polyp forceps rather than sponge holding forceps
In the unlikely event that the patient experiences significant discomfort or there is difficulty, the procedure should be abandoned and the patient referred to a gynaecologist.

11 Send polyp for histological examination
Quick info:
The polyp should be placed in a specimen pot with fixative and sent to a pathology department with a completed request form for histological examination.

12 Reassure patient
Quick info:
The patient should be reassured and advised how and when she will learn of the pathology findings.
Patient should be warned to expect some vaginal bleeding for up to 24 hours.
Evidence summary for Cervical polyps