



Cervical cerclage

Patient information

What is a cervical cerclage?

A cervical cerclage, **also known as a cervical suture or cervical stitch**, is a medical procedure where a stitch is placed around the cervix (neck of womb). This is usually carried out between 12 and 23 weeks of pregnancy.

Why is it done?

The purpose of the cerclage is to reduce the risk of your baby being born early. Premature babies have an increased risk of short and long-term health problems.

The exact cause of premature labour or late miscarriages is not clear, but may be due to changes in the cervix, such as shortening and opening. A cervical cerclage helps to keep the cervix long and closed, thereby reducing the risk of premature birth or late miscarriage.

Cervical cerclage does not prevent all preterm births and is only appropriate in some cases.

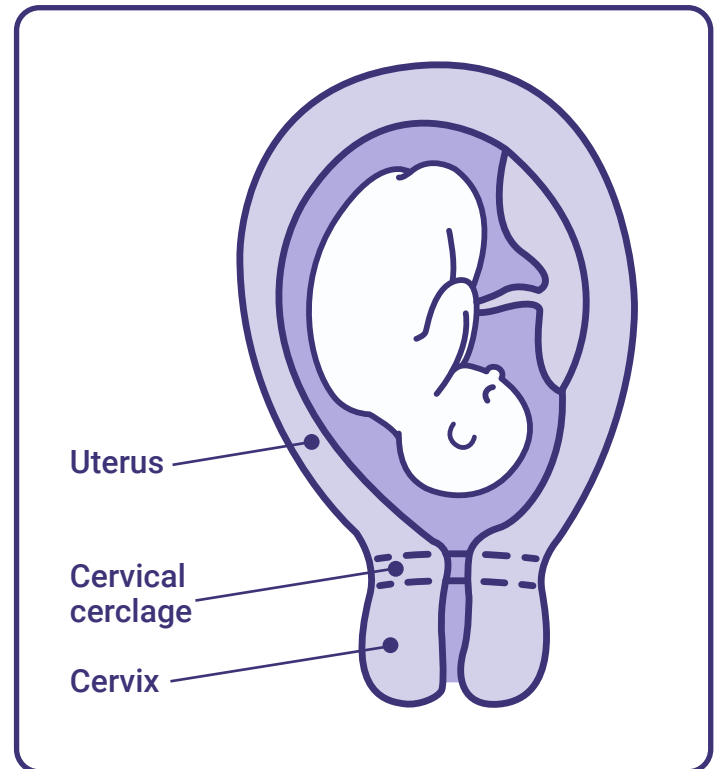
In the majority of cases, it is a planned procedure (elective cerclage). However, in a few circumstances, an urgent cerclage (emergency or rescue cerclage) may be needed.

The doctor will discuss the procedure and any specific risks with you before it is undertaken.

How is it done?

Insertion of the cerclage takes place in an operating theatre.

You may have a spinal anaesthetic, where you will stay awake but will be numb from the waist down, or you may be given a general anaesthetic, where you will be asleep. Your team will discuss the best option for you.



You will be advised not to eat or drink for six hours before the operation.

In the operating theatre, your legs will be put in supports and sterile covers will be used to keep the operating area clean. The doctor will then insert a speculum (a plastic or metal instrument used to separate the walls of the vagina to show the cervix) into the vagina and put the cerclage around the cervix. The operation should take less than 30 minutes.

Afterwards you will be offered medication to ease any discomfort. You may also have a tube (catheter) inserted into your bladder; this will be removed once the anaesthetic has worn off.

Most people will be able to go home on the day of the procedure.

After a cervical cerclage

After the procedure, you might have some bleeding from the vagina, which should change to brown in colour after a day or two. You may also experience some lower abdominal and vaginal discomfort.

Rest: Plan to rest for the first 2 to 3 days (not bed rest) after the operation. Normal activities can usually be resumed after a day or two.

Activity restrictions: Avoid strenuous exercise, heavy lifting, swimming and sexual intercourse for 2 weeks, or as advised by your doctor.

Pain relief: Take pain medication as ordered by your doctor.

Hygiene: Use sanitary pads, changing frequently to stay clean and dry. Shower as usual

Stay hydrated: Drink plenty of fluid.

Vaginal progesterone: If you have been using vaginal progesterone before your cerclage, you can restart this once any bleeding has stopped.

Follow-up appointment: Attend all scheduled follow-up appointments to monitor your pregnancy and the cerclage.

Is there anything I should look out for?

Seek assistance if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- Contractions or cramping
- Vaginal bleeding
- Your waters breaking
- Smelly vaginal discharge
- A fever – high temperature or chills.

Please call Healthdirect on 1800 022 222, contact your doctor or attend your nearest hospital emergency centre.



The information provided is for information purposes only. If you are a patient using this publication, you should seek assistance from a healthcare professional when interpreting these materials and applying them to your individual circumstances.



When will the cerclage be removed?

The cerclage will be removed in hospital at about 36-37 weeks of pregnancy, unless you go into labour before then.

Removal of a cerclage is done in one of two ways:

- In a labour ward without the need for analgesia
- In the operating theatre under conscious sedation or a spinal anaesthetic.

If you go into labour with the cervical cerclage in place, it is very important to have it removed promptly to prevent damage to your cervix.

If you think you are in labour, please contact King Edward Memorial Hospital on (08) 6458 2222.