

## Microwave Endometrial Ablation (MEA)

### **What is MEA?**

This is a treatment for heavy periods. MEA uses radio wave frequencies to heat and destroy the lining of the womb (the endometrium). The MEA applicator is a metal tube placed inside the womb. Heat comes from the tube tip and it destroys the womb lining as the tip moves around the inside of the womb.

Usually an injection called Zoladex or Prostag, is given 4-5 weeks beforehand to thin the womb lining as MEA works best if the lining is thin.

### **How long does the procedure take?**

The MEA is usually quite quick but is usually done under general anaesthetic. Therefore it involves being admitted to hospital as a day case or rarely for an overnight stay if you have a medical problem. As with any surgery under general anaesthetic you should not eat or drink for 6 hours before surgery. You will be advised about preparing for surgery during your pre op clinic appointment. Heating the endometrium itself takes 3 to 8 minutes.

### **What is the benefit of having MEA performed?**

The benefit of having a MEA is to attempt to treat your heavy periods and therefore prevent the troublesome symptoms this causes. MEA may prevent the need for more major surgery or the use of medication.

40% of women will stop having periods altogether and 50% will experience great improvement with their heavy periods. The remaining 10% may require further treatment in the future because they do not respond to MEA therapy

### **What alternatives do I have?**

There are different medicines, these include hormonal and non-hormonal tablets that can be used to treat heavy periods.

Surgical treatments include a Hysterectomy (see separate leaflets)

A specific type of coil (Mirena) can be fitted into the womb, which releases a hormone to reduce the bleeding.

Alternative treatments will be discussed with you by the medical staff, as this will depend on your individual needs.

### **What are the possible risks of having the MEA?**

- **Anaesthetic risk** you may feel sick, or have a sore throat. If you smoke you have an increased risk of chest infection.
  
- **Infection**, usually of the womb can occur, some symptoms are;
  - ◆ Smelly vaginal discharge
  - ◆ Discharge lasting longer than 2 weeks
  - ◆ Feeling generally unwell
  - ◆ Abdominal pain
  - ◆ Feverish with a high temperature

- **Damage to internal structures**

The microwave can cause burns and therefore perforation to the womb, bladder or bowel, **however this is very rare.**

If this occurs you will require surgery, which will involve a cut to the abdomen, you will need to stay in hospital for 4 - 6 days.

- **Failure to treat symptoms**

- ◆ In 10% of cases there is a risk that the procedure is not successful in treating your symptoms, this will be assessed and discussed during your follow up appointment.
- ◆ If you have pelvic pain with your heavy periods this treatment may not be helpful in treating it

### **When can I resume sexual Intercourse following MEA?**

Sexual intercourse may be resumed 4-6 weeks following the procedure

### **What can I expect after the MEA?**

Most women can go home on the same day. Period type cramps can last a few days and simple pain killing tablets such as Paracetamol, Ibuprofen can be taken as directed. The lining will come away as a brown vaginal discharge, this usually lasts up to 2 weeks.

Whilst the vaginal discharge is present it is important to use sanitary towels as tampons might increase the risk of an infection developing.

### **Following discharge from hospital**

Once the discharge has finished the next bleed will be your first period (usually 4-6 weeks later). The first period can be a bit heavy but the overall aim of MEA is to lighten the periods and most women will achieve this. Some women will have only spotting or no periods at all (usually ¼ of women who have MEA)

If you have;

Fresh blood loss from the vagina

Severe abdominal pain

Signs of infection

**Please contact your GP immediately or**

**Contact the ER staff at Liverpool Women's Hospital on 0151 702 4583**

This information sheet may be available in different formats if required. It is a brief outline of this procedure and is not intended to replace verbal communication with medical or nursing staff.

Further information regarding MEA can be found on the following web sites

<http://www.2womenshealth.co.uk/>

<http://www.sportcentric.com/vsite/vnavsite/page/directory/0,10853,4829-142339-159555-nav-list,00.html>

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