Cervical Cerclage

About cervical cerclage

Cervical cerclage is a surgery to place a stitch in the cervix during pregnancy to help prevent it from dilating, or opening, early. Dilation of the cervix early may lead to a miscarriage or a premature (early) birth.

Your doctor may recommend cervical cerclage if you:

• Had other babies born early
• Are found to have a short cervical length by ultrasound
• Have early, painless dilation of your cervix in the current pregnancy

How it is done

Cervical cerclage is often an outpatient procedure done in the hospital using regional anesthesia (spinal or epidural). This means you will be given medicine to numb your lower body. It is done during the second trimester before 23 weeks of pregnancy. The procedure usually takes less than an hour and you will go home later the same day, in most cases.

After the procedure, you may need to take it easy for a few days, including not going to work. Your doctor will talk with you about what your specific activity limits are.

Removing the cervical cerclage

For some types of cerclage, your doctor will remove the stitch around 36 weeks of pregnancy. This may allow you to have a vaginal delivery. The stitch can be removed in the doctor’s office or in the Labor and Delivery area without anesthesia. You may go into labor within a few hours after the stitch is removed (unlikely) or your pregnancy may continue for several more weeks.

For other types of cerclage, the stitch may be left in place and the baby delivered by cesarean section. The same cerclage may be used for another pregnancy.

When to call your doctor or labor and delivery

Call right away if you have any of these signs:

• Signs of preterm labor:
  › Cramping or feel like you have your period
  › Low backache
  › Contractions, tightenings, or baby balling up
  › Pressure in lower back, abdomen, or thighs
  › Increase or change in vaginal discharge

• Any foul smelling vaginal discharge
• Any vaginal spotting, bleeding, or tan discharge
• Bag of waters breaks or leaks

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