

Colposcopy

A colposcopy is a procedure where your gynaecologist takes a close examination of your cervix to help identify any microscopic abnormalities. This procedure differs from a Pap smear and may be recommended if you have an abnormal Pap smear results.

What to expect

Having a colposcopy will take between 15 minutes and half an hour. A colposcopy is usually scheduled for a time when you are not having your period but bleeding does not mean a colposcopy cannot be done.

During the procedure, a small sample of tissue (a biopsy) may be taken from any abnormal looking areas in your cervix.

The procedure

1. A speculum is inserted into the vagina.
2. The doctor looks at your cervix through the colposcope which is placed at the entrance to the vagina. The colposcope magnifies the cervix six to ten times.
3. A cotton swab may be used to remove excess mucous and a weak vinegar solution is applied to the cervix. This makes areas where there are changes in the cells turn white helping the doctor to identify abnormalities.
4. Sometimes a brown solution (iodine) is applied to view your cervix. During this examination, healthy cells turn brown. You need to tell the doctor or nurse if you are allergic to iodine.
5. Having identified any abnormalities, the doctor may take a biopsy (the removal of a tiny piece of tissue) from any areas of concern.
6. A biopsy may be felt as a sharp pinch and there may be some associated cramping pains afterwards.
7. The tissue collected is sent to a laboratory for testing to confirm the diagnosis.
8. You may have some 'spotting' for a few hours afterwards, so it is a good idea to take a sanitary pad to the consultation.

After the procedure

After the procedure, you should avoid rigorous physical exercise for 72 hours and sexual intercourse, swimming or baths (including a spa) to reduce your risk of bleeding or infection for one to two days.

Your results

The laboratory sample may take up to two weeks for the result to come to the specialist. Arrangements should be made with your specialist to discuss your results and further follow up or treatment as required.

