

Colposcopy

Patient Information Guide



The following information was prepared to help you understand the procedure involved in a colposcopy. If you have any other questions, please feel free to discuss them with your doctor or nurse.

What is colposcopy?

- Colposcopy is a medical examination for women with abnormal cervical cancer screening results (PAP test). Abnormal results can be caused by inflammation, a vaginal infection, pre-cancer or cancer of the cervix.
- A colposcope (microscope) is used to view the cervix and examine lesions on the vaginal wall or cervix in order to determine their severity.
- One or more biopsies (to collect tissue fragments) can also be performed during the colposcopy. These biopsies are used to obtain samples that are then sent to the lab and analyzed to determine whether or not they are cancerous.

Examination day

The examination requires little preparation. On the day of your appointment, 20 minutes ahead of time, come to the registration office 1D106. Bring your health card with you.

- You may eat and take your regular medication as usual.
- Avoid creams or other products near the vaginal area.
- Bring a menstrual pad with you (the biopsy can cause light vaginal bleeding).
- Try to urinate prior to the exam.
- Inform medical staff if you are taking blood thinners (aspirin, Warfarine, Heparine, Clopidogrel or any other anticoagulant). These types of medication can cause increased bleeding in biopsy cases.
- Notify medical staff if you are, or suspect you may be, pregnant. Colposcopy is safe for expectant mothers, but is not usually performed on pregnant women.
- Colposcopies can be performed at any point in your menstrual cycle. However, if you are bleeding heavily on the day of your exam, contact your clinic to determine whether you should schedule another appointment.

The colposcopy procedure

The examination procedure lasts from 10 to 15 minutes. No anesthetic is required.

- You lie down on an exam table in the same position used for PAP tests or any other gynecological exam.
- An instrument called a "speculum" is used to separate the vagina walls, allowing the doctor to see your cervix with a colposcope. The colposcope looks like a microscope and does not come in contact with your body.
- A vinegar-like acetic solution is applied in the cervical area. It makes the affected areas more visible and the lesions easier for the health professional to see.
- If a biopsy is necessary, the physician will remove tissue samples that are then sent to the lab for analysis. You will feel a slight pinching sensation for a second or two.

After the exam

- Most women can resume their usual activities immediately after the colposcopy.
- Follow-up tests (colposcopy and second PAP test) are often recommended within six months of the procedure.

If you have a biopsy:

- You may experience cramping or pain; however, it should subside within a few hours.
- You may experience vaginal discharge or bleeding for a few days.
- You should refrain from sexual intercourse or from inserting anything in your vagina (tampons, creams or others) for at least 48 hours.
- You should avoid intense exercise for 24 to 48 hours.

Warning signs

After the colposcopy, contact your family physician if you experience any of the following:

- Vaginal bleeding for more than 7 days;
- A bad-smelling vaginal discharge;
- Continuous pelvic pain or cramps even after taking Ibuprofen (like Advil);
- A temperature of 38°C (100.4°F).

Report to the emergency room if you experience very heavy vaginal bleeding for several consecutive hours.



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