



COLPOSCOPY: TAKING A CLOSER LOOK

What is a colposcopy?

Colposcopy is an examination of your cervix. A special kind of microscope, called a colposcope, is used to take a closer look at the cells of your cervix and surrounding tissue. The colposcope resembles a pair of binoculars on a stand. The cells of the cervix are enlarged about 15 times to look at those areas which appear abnormal.

Why have I been advised to have this exam?

There are a number of reasons a practitioner may recommend this exam. Your practitioner has determined that your cervix needs a more careful examination because:

- An abnormal appearing area has been seen on your cervix during an exam.
- your last pap smear has been reported as “abnormal”. More information is needed to find out where these abnormal cells are, how large of an area is involved, and what type of abnormal cells are present so the appropriate treatment can be given to you.

How is this exam done?

This exam takes 20 minutes to complete. You will lie down in the same position that you would for any other pelvic exam and a speculum will be inserted into the vagina. Your practitioner will use a vinegar solution to wipe the area he or she will be looking at. The vinegar helps highlight areas, which have cell changes due to the wart virus. Most of the exam time is spent just looking. If an area appears abnormal, a small tissue sample, called a biopsy, may be taken and sent to the lab for analysis.

Is a colposcopy painful?

A few women experience a stinging sensation when their cervix is cleansed with vinegar. If a biopsy is taken, some women describe the feeling as a pinch or a cramp, which goes away quickly. We recommend taking a non-aspirin pain reliever such as Tylenol (take two tablets), Advil or other Ibuprofen (200-400mg), one hour before your scheduled exam.

More about biopsy:

A biopsy is a small sample of tissue several layers thick; approximately the same size as a bread crumb. This sample gives us a better idea of what the abnormal cells are like, how far they extend, and how deep they are. Specimens may be taken from the cervical canal or the outer surface of the cervix. The sample is taken with a special instrument during

the colposcopy exam. The results of the biopsy and any treatment needed will be discussed with you at your follow up visit.

Instructions for self-care after the colposcopy:

If no biopsy was done, you can resume normal activities. No special self-care is needed.

Instructions for self-care after the biopsy:

If you had a biopsy done, please follow the instructions below to aid in healing and help prevent infection. The biopsy site may bleed at the time of the procedure. Your practitioner will apply pressure to the site or use a solution to stop the bleeding, you may have some spotting for a few days, or if several biopsies were done, your bleeding may be a little heavier. If heavy bleeding occurs, please call the clinic.

- **Do not put anything in the vagina for two weeks:** Other kinds of sexual activity in which the vagina is entered should also be **avoided** at this time. You may have other kinds of sexual arousal in which the vagina is **not** entered.
- **No tampons:** Sanitary pads should be worn for bleeding.
- **No douching:** Bathing is ok.

Watch for signs of infection: Call the clinic if you have any of these symptoms:

- **Fever:** 100.4 or higher
- **Bleeding:** Heavier than a normal period or soaking on e or more pads per hour.
- **Abdominal pain or persistent cramping.**
- **Unusual or foul smelling discharge** other than what you were told to expect.

Further treatment:

Sometimes the examination shows that no treatment is needed, only further follow-up. Sometimes the biopsy itself removes the abnormal cells. If abnormal cells extend beyond the margins of the biopsy or if there are other abnormal areas, then a LEEP procedure or other removal procedure of those abnormal areas may be necessary. If these treatments are necessary, you will need to return to the clinic for those treatments.

(Please see LEEP patient information sheet.)