

COLPOSCOPY

Colposcopy is viewing the cervix, vagina, and external genitals using magnification and a bright light. Using this combination, your clinician is able to examine these areas in closer detail, and differentiate between what is normal and abnormal. This technique can detect abnormal tissue that may be pre-cancerous at a very early stage, when chances for cure are the greatest. Proper diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up care are most often very effective in cancer prevention.

Why should I have Colposcopy?

Your clinician may suggest you have a Colposcopy for a number of reasons. These include:

- **To evaluate an abnormal pap smear.** Your pap smear may be reported as abnormal even though your cervix looked normal at the time of your exam. Pap smears are frequently abnormal due to vaginal infection, certain hormone imbalances, or early, potentially precancerous cervical changes (dysplasia) in cells.
- To evaluate a cervical lesion or polyp. During a pelvic exam, your health clinician may see an unusual tissue growth on your cervix. This tissue change may indicate a cervical wart (HPV) an irritation, or more seriously, dysplasia.
- If you have been exposed to diethylstilbestrol (DES). DES was a drug given to women during the 1940's to the 1960's to prevent miscarriages. It is now believed that the daughters of these women have greater risk of developing certain cervical and vaginal changes associated with a rare form of cancer. Colposcopy is recommended at regular intervals for women with a history of DES exposure.

What will happen during Colposcopy?

Colposcopy is done in the clinician's office with an instrument called a colposcope. The colposcope itself will not come in contact with your body at any time, nor will it cause any discomfort. During the external exam and the vaginal speculum exam, a diluted vinegar solution will be applied to the skin. With the use of vinegar any abnormal tissue usually appear as white areas on the surface of the cervix, vagina, or vulva. After thorough inspection with the colposcope, your health clinician will decide if a biopsy is necessary.

During a biopsy, one or two very small samples of tissue, about the size of the tip of a ballpoint pen, will be taken from the white or any other abnormal appearing area. You may feel no discomfort at all or you may feel mild menstrual-like cramps. The tissue samples will then be sent to a lab for further evaluation.

What can I expect following Colposcopy?

A plan for future care is very important following colposcopy. If no biopsy is done a plan for follow up should be formulated before you leave your clinician's office. This frequently entails either HPV testing (Human Papilloma Virus), a repeat pap smear in three to six months or a repeat colposcopy, depending on your specific medical history.

If a biopsy is done at the time of your colposcopy, your clinician will advise an appointment in approximately two weeks to discuss the biopsy results and options for your individual care.

If colposcopy has been recommended by your health clinician, do not delay your treatment. Cryotherapy can be highly effective in preventing further complications. It is important to your health and wellness now and in the future.

Colposcopy Instructions

Prior to your appointment:

- Colposcopy should not be done during the time of your menstrual period. Therefore, please determine when your period will be and schedule your appointment appropriately.
- Notify the clinician prior to your appointment if you have a history of heart murmur, mitral valve prolapse, or heart surgery.
- Contact your insurance company to assure payment of procedure.

On the day of your appointment:

- Eat a good breakfast, (e.g. cereal, juice, toast).

- Take two Advil® (or Tylenol® if you cannot tolerate Advil) one hour prior to your appointment in order to reduce cramping.

Test Results and Advice Nurse

Please call the nurse for test results and advice: 863-4463

Appointments

Appointments can be made in person or by phone. If you are unable to keep your appointment, please call and cancel. Otherwise you will be charged for the visit.

To schedule or cancel appointments, call: 863-0774

For more information about health care issues, visit the UHS Web site at www.sa.psu.edu/uhs

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

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