

Colposcopy: What to expect.

COLPOSCOPY

What is it?

A colposcopy examines the cervix and vagina using a low-powered magnifying instrument known as a colposcope. A gynecologist who is specially trained as a colposcopist does this examination.

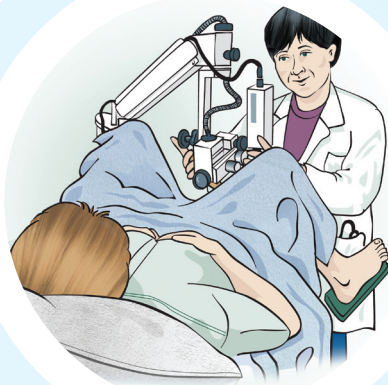
If you are pregnant, it is safe to have a colposcopy.

Why is it done?

The colposcopy will look for abnormalities on your cervix. The doctor can then decide if any treatment is necessary.

What should I do before the procedure?

- Tell the nurse or doctor if you are allergic to iodine or shellfish.



What happens?

The process is like the Pap test.

1. You lie down on the exam table and put your feet in supports.
2. A speculum is used to open the vagina so the cervix can be seen.
3. Using the colposcope, the doctor looks closely at the cervix. The colposcope stays outside of the body.
4. A sample of tissue (biopsy) may be taken to determine if treatment is needed.

BIOPSY

What is it?

A biopsy removes a tissue sample. The sample is sent to the laboratory for examination.

What happens?

The doctor will remove the sample during the colposcopy. The sample is smaller than a 1/4 of the size of a pencil eraser. It is gently removed with an instrument similar to a pair of tweezers.

Will it hurt?

A biopsy usually takes no more than a minute. Some women feel nothing. Others describe a “pinching” feeling or “cramps”. This usually stops within a few minutes. Your doctor may suggest a pain reliever.

Are there any after-effects?

You may have spotting for a few days. If so, use pads, not tampons.

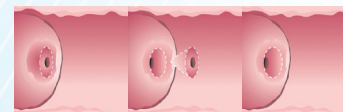
For at least 2 days after your biopsy, do not:

- Douche
- Have sexual intercourse
- Use tampons

What types of biopsy and treatments exist?

CONE BIOPSY

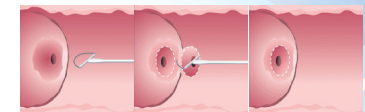
A cone biopsy refers to the removal of a cone-shaped piece of tissue.



It is done as a day surgery procedure and requires an anesthetic. If cancer cells have been found, it will also determine whether or not these cells have spread to other tissues.

LEEP

LEEP is short for loop electrosurgical excision procedure. After freezing the area with local anesthetic, an electrical wire loop is inserted into the vagina and the abnormal tissue is removed.



CRYOSURGERY

Cryosurgery is an uncommon treatment that uses extreme cold to destroy abnormal tissue on the cervix.

In cryosurgery, a probe is placed against the cervix for a number of minutes. Though not painful, the sensation felt can be described as “heavy” and cramping will occur. Following the procedure, you may have watery discharge that could last two to three weeks.

LASER SURGERY

Laser surgery is a treatment that uses an intense, narrow beam of light (called a laser beam) to remove abnormal cervical cells. A local anesthetic is used. A watery discharge is a common side effect that may last up to two weeks.

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Pap tests: Understand your results.

Although most Pap test results are normal (Negative for Intraepithelial Lesion or Malignancy), about one in ten tests come back as abnormal (cervical dysplasia). The following is a description of Pap test results.

Terms to describe the quality of your Pap test:

Words you might see	What it means	What you should do
Satisfactory for Evaluation	The lab was able to examine the cells on your Pap test.	Follow through on the recommendation for your diagnosis.
Unsatisfactory for Evaluation	Sometimes there is a problem looking at the cells from your Pap test. This may be because not enough cells were taken, or there was too much blood mixed in with the cells.	Book an appointment for a repeat Pap test in 3 months. This repeat test is because of a problem looking at the cells and not because of any abnormal findings. If this result occurs again, you may be referred for colposcopy.
Endometrial Cells	Endometrial cells could be of no significance but could indicate the need for further testing.	Talk to your doctor or nurse.

Return to your doctor or nurse anytime you have abnormal vaginal bleeding (bleeding after menopause, persistent bleeding between periods or with sex), or abnormal vaginal discharge.



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Terms to describe the type of cells seen on the slide (diagnosis):

Words you might see	What it means	What you should do
Negative for Intraepithelial Lesion or Malignancy	No abnormal changes were seen.	Have Pap tests every two years (unless you have an abnormal result).
ASC-US (Atypical Squamous Cells of Undetermined Significance)	Abnormal changes cannot be clearly identified.	Book an appointment for a repeat Pap test. If you are 21 years of age or older and the ASC-US result happens again, you will need colposcopy.
LSIL (Low-Grade Squamous Intraepithelial Lesion)	The laboratory has detected mild abnormal changes on your cervix.	Book an appointment for a repeat Pap test. If you are 21 years of age or older and the LSIL result happens again, you will need colposcopy.
ASC-H (Atypical Squamous Cells – cannot rule out High Grade Squamous Intraepithelial Lesion, HSIL)	Abnormal changes were seen and they may be HSIL.	Make sure your doctor or nurse has made a colposcopy appointment for you.
HSIL (High Grade Squamous Intraepithelial Lesion)	Moderate to severe abnormal changes were seen. This result is more serious.	Make sure your doctor or nurse has made a colposcopy appointment for you.
AGC (Atypical Glandular Cells)	There may be abnormal changes.	Make sure your doctor or nurse has made a colposcopy appointment for you.
Carcinoma	You may have cancer.	Make sure your doctor or nurse has made a colposcopy appointment for you.

Other words you might see that describe the type of cells seen on the slide:

Words you might see	What it means	What you should do
Organisms Reactive/Repair	You probably have an infection or some type of irritation to your cervix. Talk with your doctor or nurse if you see the words trichomonas, actinomyces chlamydia or herpes virus effects.	The Pap test does not check for sexually transmitted infections (STI's). If you think you have an STI, tell your doctor or nurse so you can talk about other tests.