

Colposcopy of the Vagina and Cervix

What is a colposcopy?

A colposcopy is a procedure where your physician uses a large microscope called a colposcope to look at the vagina and cervix and possibly take a sample of tissue.

When is it used?

This test may be done after you have had an abnormal Pap smear. Colposcopy is a test used for diagnosing precancerous or cancerous changes in the cervix or vaginal cells. The results of this test will help your physician determine the proper treatment.

How do I prepare for a colposcopy?

The procedure does not take long (about ½ hour) and no particular preparation is necessary.

What happens during the procedure?

Your physician will use a colposcope to look into your vagina. You will lie on the examining table just as for a regular pelvic exam. The physician will use an instrument to spread the vaginal walls apart, and then place the colposcope at the vaginal opening.

When your physician looks into the vagina, he or she will look at your cervix. If your doctor sees any abnormalities, he or she may take a small tissue sample. You may feel a pinch or slight cramp. The tissue will be sent to the lab for analysis.

What happens after the procedure?

You may feel a little lightheaded right after the test and we may ask you to lie down for a few minutes after the test is over. You could also have some mild cramping and or bleeding or dark discharge for up to two weeks after the procedure.

Your physician will explain to you what was seen during the procedure. The test results should be ready in a about two weeks.

Ask your doctor what recommendations they have and when you should come back for a checkup.

What are the benefits of this procedure?

Your physician should be able to make a more accurate diagnosis of the problem in your cervix and vagina and suggest further treatment if necessary.

What are the risks associated with this procedure?

Minor bleeding from the biopsy site may occur. Other risks include:

- Heavy bleeding (more than one pad per hour or more bleeding than your menstrual flow)
- Infection

You should ask your physician how these risks apply to you.

When should I call my doctor?

Call the doctor immediately if you have these problems after the procedure:

- Heavy bleeding
- Fever greater than 100.4 degrees
- Pelvic pain

Call the doctor during office hours if:

- You have questions about the test or its result.
- You want to make another appointment.