



COLPOSCOPY

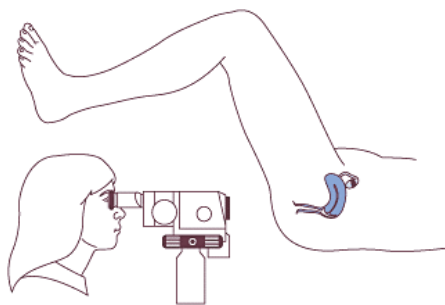
A colposcopy is an examination which is recommended after some positive or abnormal cervical screening test results. Your local doctor (GP) will discuss these results with you. After a colposcopy, decisions can be made about whether treatment is needed or not.

Colposcopy is an examination of the cervix. It allows the specialist to find any cell changes and to assess the extent of the changes.

The examination can be uncomfortable but it should not be painful. It will last for five to ten minutes. Our colposcopes are connected to a television monitor, if you like, you can watch the procedure as it happens. If you do not wish to do this, please tell the doctor or nurse.

A colposcope is a magnifying instrument, like binoculars on a stand which we use to look at the cervix. You will be asked to undress from the waist down and will be given a gown to wear.

At the start of the examination your legs are placed in leg-supports. These can be adjusted to suit you, so if you are not comfortable, please ask for them to be adjusted before the examination begins.



A special instrument called a **speculum** (the same instrument used during a Cervical Screening Test) is inserted into your vagina. This will hold the walls of your vagina slightly apart so we can see the cervix. The colposcope does not go into your vagina, but is positioned between your legs to allow the doctor to examine the cervix.

The examination usually starts with a repeat cervical test. The first sample is taken from the outside of the cervix using a tool called a 'cervix broom'. The second is taken from the canal of the cervix using a special brush.



View of cervix through a colposcope



Cervical screening test using a brush

After taking the cervical test, the specialist will dab the cervix with very dilute acetic acid (vinegar) solution. This will help to identify any abnormal cells. Most women do not find this painful although it may sting. With the colposcope it is possible for the specialist to see the area and pattern of abnormal cells. It is important to check if the abnormal area is only on the outside or if it goes into the canal of the cervix. A brown dye (iodine) may then be used to outline the changes.

When abnormal areas are identified, the doctor may take one or two small biopsies (samples of tissue from the surface of the cervix). This can cause mild discomfort or menstrual-type cramp. Please ask if you want pain relief.

After the examination, the doctor will make recommendations as to your need for treatment or not.

For more information

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