

# Women's Business: Colposcopy

## Why do I need a colposcopy?

You will need a colposcopy if your Cervical Screening Test (previously known as Pap smear) result suggests that you might have cell changes in your cervix that may need treatment.

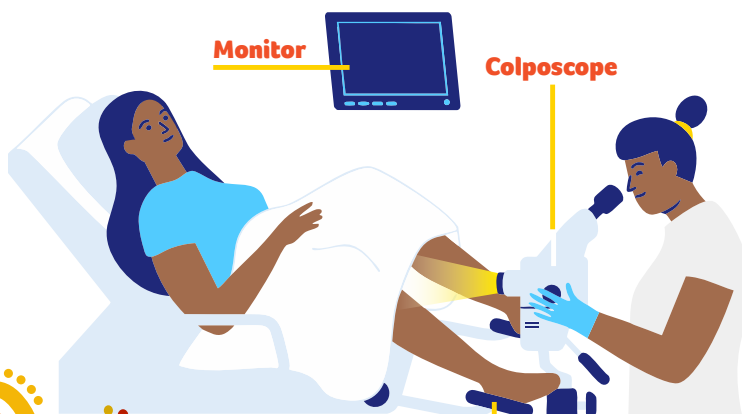
There is a chance these cell changes may turn into cervical cancer if not treated quickly; this is why a colposcopy is important.

A colposcopy lets the doctor or nurse look at the cell changes more closely to decide if treatment is needed.

**Don't be shame. Colposcopies are very common procedures. Most cell changes in the cervix can be treated quickly and easily before they turn into cervical cancer.**

## What is a colposcopy?

A colposcopy is when a doctor or nurse uses a special tool with a bright light, called a colposcope to look closely at your cervix, vagina, and vulva for any cell changes.



## What happens during a colposcopy?

1. Your doctor or nurse will invite you into a room and have a yarn about your appointment.
2. You will be asked to undress from the waist down and lie down on a special bed or chair. You will be given a gown or sheet to cover yourself with.
3. When you are ready, your doctor or nurse will:
  - Insert an instrument called a speculum into your vagina to view your cervix.
  - Use a colposcope to look closely at your cervix, vagina and vulva.
  - Take a sample of cells from your cervix with a small brush.
  - Put a special liquid onto your cervix to help see any cell changes more clearly.

If they find any abnormal cell changes, they might take a very small sample for further testing in a laboratory. This is called a **biopsy**.

## Good to know:

- You can bring a support person with you to the appointment.
- You can ask for an Aboriginal Liaison Officer to be with you.
- You can request for a female doctor or nurse to do the colposcopy.
- You can ask questions during the procedure.
- You can ask the doctor or nurse to stop at any time.

## Is it painful?

A colposcopy may feel a bit uncomfortable, but it shouldn't be very painful. If you have a biopsy, you might feel a small pinch or mild cramping. Talk to your doctor or nurse about pain relief before, during, and after the procedure to stay comfortable.

## How long will it take?

The colposcopy takes about 20 minutes, but your visit will take about an hour.

## Before the appointment

- Let your doctor know if you are pregnant or might be pregnant.
- Avoid sex and tampons for at least 2 days before.
- Avoid lubricants or creams in your vagina for at least 3 days before, unless otherwise prescribed.

### Tip:

If you have vaginal dryness, have gone through menopause, or are a trans man with a cervix, using oestrogen cream or tablets can help make a colposcopy more comfortable. You can ask your doctor about this.

## When will I get my results?

The doctor or nurse may be able to tell you right away if they find anything unusual. You will get your full results in about a week. Then your doctor will let you know if you need treatment.

## After the colposcopy

You can return to normal activities right away, but you may want to rest for the day. You can usually drive home, but it might be good to have someone else drive you.

After the colposcopy, you might have a little vaginal discharge or light bleeding for a few days.

For at least 3 days, or until your discharge goes away, you should avoid:

- having sex
- having baths or swimming
- high intensity exercise
- tampons, creams and lubricants.

**It is very unlikely – but if you have a lot of bleeding or a stomach ache, fever or chills, contact your doctor immediately.**

## Where can I get more information and support?

For support, reach out to your local **Aboriginal Health Service, Aboriginal Liaison Officer** at the hospital, colposcopy clinic, doctor or nurse. You can also call Cancer Council at 13 11 20 for free, confidential help from a trained nurse.

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