



## Colposcopy

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Colposcopy is a procedure in which a magnifying device with a light source (colposcope) is used in the clinical examination of the female genital organs. Colposcopy is performed to investigate inflammatory changes, injuries, cellular changes and cancerous growths in the vulva, vagina, and cervix.

### Indications

Colposcopies are often performed when one or more cervical screening tests (e.g. Pap smear) return showing abnormal results. Colposcopy is also recommended in women with unexplained pelvic pain, unexplained vaginal bleeding after sexual intercourse, or an inflamed cervix.

### Pre-procedural instructions

You will need to inform your doctor about your menstrual status, pregnancy status, any health problems, medications, and allergies. You should schedule your colposcopy appointment when you are not on your period. You will be instructed not to engage in sexual intercourse, or use any vaginal medications, douches, creams or tampons one day prior to the procedure. Pain relievers may be taken 30 minutes before starting the procedure to keep you comfortable.

### Procedure

The colposcopy procedure itself takes approximately ten minutes. During colposcopy, you will lie down on your back on a special chair, with knees drawn up and legs spread apart. The gynaecologist inserts a device called a speculum into the visualise the cervix. The cervix and vagina will be swabbed with a solution of iodine or vinegar to remove any mucus and make the abnormal areas more visible. The gynaecologist then examines the cervix for any abnormalities using a colposcope which remains external to the vagina. If an abnormal area is identified a biopsy (tissue sample) will be taken for further histological (laboratory) examination.

### Post-procedural care

After colposcopy you may experience some pain and bleeding for a couple of days. You will not have any restriction on your day-to-day activities. If a biopsy is done, you may have a small amount of brown or black vaginal discharge. The use of douches, vaginal creams and having sexual intercourse are not recommended until the bleeding subsides. Consult your doctor if you have any infectious symptoms such as fever, chills, heavy vaginal bleeding, abdominal pain or cramps.

### Risks and complications

Colposcopy is a very safe clinical procedure. The major risks associated with colposcopy include heavy bleeding, pelvic pain and abdominal pain. In rare cases infection can occur; if you suspect infection you should return to see your treating doctor and you may be prescribed antibiotics or other treatment.

Colposcopy is not recommended for pregnant women as the nature of the procedure can lead to complications and early labour.