



Colposcopy Fact Sheet

As you have been advised, your last Pap test has been reported “abnormal.” This means you should have tests to find out where these abnormal cells are and what types of cells are abnormal. We do these tests at our office.

As a screening, a Pap test may not give the complete picture. With the help of an instrument called a colposcope, a biopsy (tissue sample) can be taken. This significantly improves the accuracy of the diagnosis.

What is a colposcope?

A colposcope is an instrument mounted on a stand and used to look at the cervix and vagina through a low power microscope.

What is a colposcopy?

A colposcopy is a painless examination of the cervix and vagina with a colposcope. This exam is usually done between menstrual periods and generally takes less than 20 minutes. As with a Pap test, a speculum is inserted into the vagina to give a view of the cervix and vagina. A solution is applied to the cervix and vagina which makes the areas containing abnormal cells turn white.

Why is a woman advised to have an exam with a colposcope?

If the cervix looks abnormal or if the Pap test indicates the presence of abnormal cells, colposcopy may help in diagnosis and in planning of treatment. This magnified view may clarify abnormalities or show that cervical changes are not abnormal. If abnormal cells are found, a colposcopic exam can be used to decide from which areas a biopsy should be taken.

What is a biopsy of the cervix?

A biopsy of the cervix is the removal of a small piece (or pieces) of the tissue from the cervix using a specially designed instrument. We may need to do this during colposcopy. This tissue is sent to a laboratory where it is examined under a microscope and a diagnosis is then sent to our clinic. We will contact you regarding the result.

Is a biopsy painful?

Most women describe the procedure as feeling like a sharp pinch. Some experience a menstrual-type cramp. There may be slight spotting or bleeding for a few days after a cervical biopsy.

What treatment will I need?

Sometimes the examination shows that no treatment is needed, only further follow-up. If minor treatment is needed, we may provide it at our clinic. In the event your condition requires more evaluation or treatment than we can provide, we will refer you to a specialist for further management.