

ABOUT YOUR COLPOSCOPY

[kol-pos-kuh-pee]



BEFORE YOUR COLPOSCOPY

WHY DO I NEED A COLPOSCOPY?

You need a colposcopy because your pap smear showed some abnormal cells. The pap smear is only a screening test, and an abnormal result does not mean that you have cancer or even that you should be worried. An abnormal result means that your doctor needs to look at your cervix with a microscope to see clearly any areas that might be a problem. Depending on what your doctor sees, more testing may be needed to help prevent cancer from developing in the future.

WHAT IS A COLPOSCOPY?

A colposcopy is a procedure which allows the doctor to look at the cells of your cervix using a microscope. The cervix is the tissue forming the canal that opens into the uterus (the womb). To access the cervix, a provider will place a speculum in your vagina. The provider then uses a colposcope, which is a microscope with a light. The colposcope does not touch your body. It lets the doctor see cells that might be causing the pap smear to be abnormal.

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR A COLPOSCOPY?

Do not have sex or use creams in the vagina for 24 hours before your colposcopy appointment. If you are having heavy bleeding with your monthly period, please call (919) 966-2281 to reschedule your appointment. Light bleeding is not a problem. You should eat before coming to the clinic.

DURING YOUR COLPOSCOPY

WHAT HAPPENS DURING A COLPOSCOPY?

Your doctor will paint your cervix with a clear vinegar solution that will make any abnormal cells easier to see.

HOW WILL I FEEL DURING THE COLPOSCOPY?

During the colposcopy most women feel no discomfort. Some feel a little stinging from the vinegar solution. Your legs may become shaky or tired. A nurse will be there to assist you.

WHAT IF THE DOCTOR SEES ABNORMAL CELLS?

If the doctor sees cells that have turned white after the vinegar solution is applied, the doctor will do a biopsy of those cells. The doctor may also obtain a biopsy from the inside of your cervix if the doctor cannot see whether or not there are any abnormal cells in the cervix. The biopsy shows if cells are pre-cancerous or cancerous.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE BIOPSY?

An instrument is used to take a small sample of tissue from your cervix in one or more places which may include tissues from inside of the cervix.

HOW WILL I FEEL DURING THE BIOPSY?

You will be awake during the procedure. You will feel a strong pinch as well as mild to severe cramping. Unless you have been advised otherwise, you may take Ibuprofen or Tylenol one hour before your visit.

AFTER YOUR COLPOSCOPY**WHAT WILL I EXPERIENCE AFTER THE COLPOSCOPY AND BIOPSY, IF PERFORMED?**

You may have some cramping for the rest of the day and notice some spotting. Wear a small pad for the first few days. You may notice some charcoal specks and brown discharge on the pad due to the medicines that the doctor applied to your cervix to control bleeding. It is safe to bathe as usual. You may take ibuprofen and Tylenol for cramping.

WHEN SHOULD I CALL THE DOCTOR?

Call (919) 966-2281 (available 24/7) if you have any of the following:

- Pain not relieved by Ibuprofen or Tylenol
- Bleeding enough to soak a pad in 1 hour
- A temperature of 100 degrees or more

WHEN CAN I HAVE SEXUAL INTERCOURSE?

Many types of sexual intercourse do not involve the area near your cervix, and you are welcome to have those types of intercourse whenever you feel ready. Campus Health recommends waiting a week after your colposcopy to have intercourse involving your vagina, and at the very least, you should wait until any bleeding and cramping has stopped.

HOW DO I GET THE RESULTS OF MY BIOPSY?

Results are usually ready 1 or 2 weeks after the biopsy. The doctor will tell you how your biopsy results will be reported to you and what you need to do. If you have not received your results within 4 weeks, you may call the Gynecology clinic at (919) 966-2281.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

acog.org/womens-health/faqs/colposcopy
womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/pap-hpv-tests
ashasexualhealth.org/human_papilloma_virus