

North Carolina Women's Hospital

ABOUT YOUR COLPOSCOPY

“cul-poss-co-pee”

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 you have cancer or that you should be worried. It does mean that your doctor needs to look at your cervix with a microscope to see clearly any areas that might be a problem. If abnormal cells are seen, then 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 area of tissue at the end of the uterus (the womb). This instrument is called 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) 966-1195 to reschedule your appointment. Light bleeding is not a problem. You may eat before coming to the clinic.

What happens during a Colposcopy?

Before the colposcopy the doctor does another pap smear. Then 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, but your 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 also do a biopsy. The biopsy will tell if the cells are pre-cancerous or cancerous.

How will I feel during the biopsy?

You will be awake during the procedure. Some women feel mild to moderate cramping. Unless you have been advised otherwise, you may take Ibuprofen or Tylenol one hour before the colposcopy.

What is the biopsy like?

An instrument is used to take a small sample of tissue from your cervix in one of more places. You may feel a pinch. This is called a cervical biopsy. The doctor may need to remove some cells from inside of the cervix. You may feel mild cramping if this is needed.

What will I experience after the Colposcopy and biopsy?

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. To reduce the risk of infection, nothing should be placed in the vagina, like tampons, for three days. It is safe to bathe as usual. You may take Ibuprofen and Tylenol for cramping.

When should I call the doctor?

Call if you have 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

The numbers to call are:

- Daytime; (919) 966-7822 – Gynecology/Oncology clinic
- Night; (919) 966-4131 – have the Gynecology Resident on-call paged

When can I have sexual intercourse?

Wait three days after the biopsy to begin having sex again.

How do I get the results of my biopsy?

Results are usually ready in 1-2 weeks after 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 gotten results within 4 weeks, you may call the Gynecology/Oncology office at (919) 966-1197.