

## What is a colposcopy?

It is a procedure to look closely at the cervix, vagina or vulva. A colposcope looks like binoculars mounted on a stand. It magnifies, or enlarges, what is seen. Your doctor will be able to see problems that cannot be seen by the eye alone.

## When is this procedure used?

It is used to follow-up:

- Abnormal Pap
- Positive HPV test results
- Abnormal skin changes
- Unexplained bleeding from the vagina

## How do I prepare for the procedure?

- Tell your doctor if you think you might be pregnant.
- For at least **24 hours before the procedure do not:**
  - Have vaginal intercourse
  - Douche
- One hour before the procedure, take 600 mg of ibuprofen. (Do not take if you have been told to not take ibuprofen or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). Eat something before you take the ibuprofen.

## What if I am having my period on the day of the procedure?

- If the bleeding is light or spotting, come to your procedure.
- If the bleeding is heavier than this, reschedule your appointment if possible.

## What can I expect during the procedure?

- You will get on an exam table, like you do for a pelvic exam. The doctor will put a speculum in your vagina. The doctor may apply a liquid that will help

show abnormal-appearing areas. This may cause a burning or tingling sensation.

- Your doctor may remove a small piece of tissue, called a biopsy, to send to the lab. Sometimes more than one biopsy is collected. You may feel some pressure or cramping during a biopsy of the cervix. Your doctor may inject some local anesthesia before collecting a biopsy from the vulva or lower vagina.
- Your doctor may use a substance to stop bleeding. Dark gray or brown discharge following this is normal.

### **What are possible risks from this procedure?**

We work very hard to make sure your procedure is as safe and comfortable as possible, but problems can occur, even when things go as planned. It is important that you are aware of these possible problems, how often they happen, and what will be done to correct them.

#### **Possible risks during procedure include:**

Rarely, there is unexpectedly heavy bleeding following a biopsy. If this happens, the problem will be managed as appropriate.

#### **Possible risks that can occur days to weeks after surgery include:**

- **Heavy bleeding:** Heavy bleeding following this procedure is rare.
- **Infection:** Infections are treated with antibiotics. The risk of infection is less than 1 in 100.

### **When will I go home after procedure?**

Most women go home immediately after the procedure.

### **After I get home, when do I need to call my doctor?**

**Call your doctor right away if you have any of the following signs and symptoms:**

- A fever over 100.4°F (38°C)

- Heavy bleeding (soak a regular pad in an hour or less)
- Severe pain in your abdomen or pelvis that the pain medication is not helping
- Heavy vaginal discharge (spotting and light discharge are normal)

## **How will I care for myself at home after procedure?**

### **Bleeding:**

- Spotting blood or brown-colored discharge (old blood) is normal and may last for up to one week.

### **Activities:**

- **Showers:** Showers and baths are allowed as soon as you want after your procedure.
- **Exercise:** You may begin normal physical activity immediately after the procedure. Ask your doctor when you can start specific activities like swimming.
- **Sex:** Do not have vaginal intercourse for 24 hours after the procedure if your doctor took a biopsy (a small amount of tissue).
- **Work:** Most patients return to work immediately after the procedure.

### **Follow-up with your doctor:**

If your procedure included a biopsy, it is important that you understand how you will get results and plan follow-up. Please discuss this with your doctor before you go home after the procedure.

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