

COLPOSCOPY

TO YOUR HEALTH - PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT



WHAT IS A COLPOSCOPY?

A colposcopy is a way your medical provider can examine your genitals, vagina, and cervix closely. A colposcope is an instrument that shines a light on the cervix and magnifies the view for your medical provider. At the beginning of the exam, you lie back and place your feet in the stirrups as you would for a Pap smear. Your medical provider inserts a speculum into your vagina until your cervix is visible. Your medical provider will apply a vinegar solution to the cervix and vagina with a cotton ball or swab. The vinegar makes abnormal tissue turn white so your medical provider can identify areas that may need further evaluation.

If your medical provider sees areas of abnormal tissue during the colposcopy, a biopsy may be performed. This involves removing small samples of tissue from any abnormal areas in or around the cervix. A pathologist will examine these samples.

It usually takes 20 to 30 minutes for your medical provider to complete a colposcopy and biopsy.

WHY IS A COLPOSCOPY PERFORMED?

A colposcopy is usually performed to help your medical provider find a reason for your abnormal Pap smear. A colposcopy is important because it can detect pre-cancerous or cancer cells at an early stage.

IS THE PROCEDURE PAINFUL?

If your medical provider takes a biopsy sample, you may feel mild cramping and/or pinching when the abnormal tissue is removed. Relaxing your muscles as much as possible and taking slow, deep breaths during the procedure may help. You may feel less discomfort if you take an over-the-counter pain reliever such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen (if you are not allergic) before the procedure.

HOW SHOULD I PREPARE TO HAVE A COLPOSCOPY?

Please avoid urination prior to arrival as a urine specimen may be done for pregnancy testing. Avoid douching, using vaginal medications and having sexual intercourse during the forty-eight (48) hours before your appointment.

DOES THIS PROCEDURE AFFECT MY ABILITY TO HAVE CHILDREN?

No. If your medical provider takes a biopsy sample, the amount of tissue taken from your cervix is very small and removing it will not affect any future pregnancies. However, it is important to let your medical provider know if you are pregnant now or even if you might be pregnant. This information will change the way your medical provider does the procedure.

WILL I HAVE BLEEDING AFTER THE COLPOSCOPY?

You may have a dark-colored vaginal discharge after the colposcopy. If your medical provider takes a biopsy sample, a thick, brownish-yellow paste will be put on that area to stop any bleeding. When this paste mixes with blood, it forms a thick dark discharge which may look like tissue. It is normal to have this discharge for a couple of days after the procedure. It is also normal to have a little spotting for at least two days after a colposcopy.

CAN I USE TAMPONS AFTER THE PROCEDURE?

No. Do not use tampons or put anything in your vagina for at least one week after the procedure, or until your medical provider tells you it is safe. Do not have sexual intercourse for at least one week.

WHEN WILL I GET THE RESULTS OF MY COLPOSCOPY?

It usually takes 7 days for your medical provider to get a report from the pathologist. Make a follow-up appointment for 7 days from the date of the biopsy unless your medical provider directs you otherwise.

NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF...

- Heavy vaginal bleeding (using more than one sanitary pad per hour).
- Lower abdominal pain.
- Fever, chills or a bad-smelling vaginal odor.

References: Griffith's Instructions for Patients, 7th Edition
www.webmd.com

Student Health Center



WWW.SIU.EDU/~SHC

This information is for educational purposes only. Consult your doctor for specific medical advice, diagnosis and treatment.

10/08/2008

618-453-3311

Dial-A-Nurse is available after-hours until 10:30 p.m. during fall and spring semesters. In case of emergency dial 911.