

## Colposcopy Outpatients Patient Information



The Information Standard Certified Member

# Information

If you need this information in large print, easy read, on audiotape or in another language please call 0800 7838058 or e-mail [pals@dchft.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@dchft.nhs.uk)

If you wish to obtain a list of the sources used to develop this information leaflet please call 0800 7838058 or e-mail [patient.info@dchft.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.info@dchft.nhs.uk)

Author: Miss A Cooper  
Role: Lead Colposcopy Consultant  
Publication Date: 07/15  
Review Date: 07/17

## What is Colposcopy?

1



- Colposcopy is simply a detailed look at the cervix (entrance to the womb). A speculum (the instrument which we use to see your cervix so we can take a smear) is inserted into the vagina. Instead of looking at the cervix with the naked eye, which happens when you have your smear, we use a special microscope to look at the changes in the cervix. Special solutions are applied to the cervix to show up any areas of abnormality
- We usually have a television screen so that you can watch the examination if you so wish

### What to expect at the Colposcopy clinic:

- When you are seen in the clinic the Doctor or Nurse seeing you will discuss your smear result with you and explain the need for the Colposcopy examination. We examine you in a special chair which has padded supports to rest your legs in. The cervix is viewed using a speculum and sometimes a repeat smear is taken
- The clinician will then put a number of different solutions onto the cervix to look for changes that indicate any abnormality, which we call CIN (Cervical Intraepithelial Neoplasia)
- The clinician may want to take a sample from this abnormal area. This is called a biopsy
- This involves taking a tiny piece of tissue from the neck of the womb. This procedure takes only a couple of seconds and can cause some slight discomfort but is not usually painful. This sample is then sent to the pathologist to look for any abnormality. You may experience some spotting for up to 7 days following your biopsy and should not have sexual intercourse or use tampons for the following 7 days either.

- The Doctor will explain to you what they have seen and whether any treatment is necessary
- You will usually be in the clinic for 20-25 minutes

## Why do I need a Colposcopy?

- The usual reason is because you have had an abnormal smear result. This is very common and in most cases an abnormal smear result does not mean you have a cancer of the cervix.
- Sometimes you are referred for a colposcopy because of an inadequate smear result
- Very occasionally the doctor or nurse taking your smear has seen a polyp – a small growth from the lining of the cervix or womb, which is very common
- Occasionally you will be seen because you have had bleeding after sexual intercourse

## Before Colposcopy

1. Please do not have sex or use a tampon for 24 hours before your appointment
2. Please do not use any vaginal pessaries or creams for 24 hours before your appointment
3. If you think you will be in the middle of your period, your periods are heavy or you do not wish to be examined during your period, please give the clinic a ring because it may be necessary to change your appointment. If the bleeding is heavy it is sometimes difficult for us to get a good view of the cervix
4. You may bring someone with you to the appointment if you wish
5. Please make sure you have breakfast or something to eat before your appointment
6. It is safe to perform a colposcopy when you are pregnant, however we do not normally take any biopsies at this time

## After Colposcopy

1. You can usually return to work or carry on with your normal day
2. If a biopsy has been taken, you may have a small amount of bleeding. This can last 3-5 days and you should wear a sanitary towel. Do not use a tampon.
3. It is best not to have sex or use creams etc. until the bleeding has all settled
4. You may notice a dark fluid-like material on your pad. This is normal and is the liquid we paint on the cervix during the examination
5. We will give you a sanitary towel after the procedure, but you may wish to bring a panty liner of your own

## What are the complications of Colposcopy?

Colposcopy is a very safe procedure. Very rarely you may experience heavy bleeding or a smelly vaginal discharge following a biopsy of the cervix. This may indicate an infection, so you should see your GP as soon as possible for treatment.

## Try not to worry

Less than 1 in 1000 women referred to colposcopy for an abnormal screening smear has cervical cancer.

The reason we have cervical screening is that there are easily recognisable changes in the cervix that develop in most women many years before a cancer can develop. Treating these at an early stage can prevent cancer developing.

## Further Information

If you would like further information we would recommend the following internet sites:

[www.bsccp.org.uk](http://www.bsccp.org.uk)

[www.jostrust.org.uk](http://www.jostrust.org.uk)

## Contact Telephone Numbers:

- Dorset County Hospital (Switchboard): 01305 251150
- Colposcopy Appointments: 01305 255729
- Colposcopy Nurse: 01305 254239