

COLPOSCOPY

What is Colposcopy?

Colposcopy is the painless examination of the cervix (mouth of the womb) and vagina with a low power microscope. It may be difficult to determine the condition of the cervix by simply looking with the naked eye. A magnified view may clarify abnormalities or indicate that the cervical changes are benign (probably not cancer). This exam is usually done between menstrual periods and takes from 10 to 30 minutes. If a cervix looks abnormal or if the Pap smear indicates the presence of abnormal cells, a colposcopy is done to rule out any disease. Daughters of women who took DES during their pregnancy are advised to have periodic colposcopic examinations.

Do all physicians do colposcopic examinations?

No. Such exams require training and experience.

What is a biopsy of the cervix?

This is the removal of a small piece (or pieces of tissue from the cervix using a specially designed instrument). Women are positioned on the exam table, as they would be for a pelvic exam. A speculum is inserted to provide a view of the cervix and vagina. A biopsy is taken and the tissue is removed and sent to the laboratory where it is examined under a microscope to determine whether changes indicate cancer or not.

Is a biopsy painful?

Many women describe the procedure as feeling like a pinch. Any discomfort is momentary. There may be slight spotting or bleeding for a short time after a cervical biopsy.

Are repeated colposcopic examinations needed?

Sometimes. When abnormal cells are found on a Pap smear, they may indicate some change from normal to abnormal cells, a process called dysplasia. Dysplasia, in some women, may progress to cancer of the cervix. Periodic pap smears, and colposcopic exams may be used to follow the status of this condition and establish the need for appropriate treatment.

How is surgical conization (“cone”) of the cervix related to colposcopy?

Colposcopy involves merely looking at the cervix. Conization of the cervix is the surgical removal of a cone shaped portion of the cervix and is done in the hospital. Colposcopy can usually establish whether such removal is indicated.

Post Colposcopy instruction:

- No intercourse for two weeks.
- Nothing in the vagina for two weeks, such as tampons, creams, douches, or diaphragms.
- No tub baths for two weeks.
- Report any bleeding like a period flow if not time for period.

Note: a coffee-ground like discharge from the vagina may occur after the procedure due to the use of a medication during the procedure that stops bleeding. The use of a vaginal pad may be indicated.