



## **1. Why do I need a further examination/Colposcopy?**

You have been asked to have a further examination. This may be because your cervical smear test has shown evidence of changes in cells on the neck of the womb (cervix).

These changes act as early warning signals that cervical cancer might develop in the future if left untreated. The colposcopy examination allows the doctor to decide if you need treatment. For some women the altered cells on the cervix return to normal by themselves.

Other women may require treatment to the cervix that can usually be carried out in the colposcopy clinic.

## **2. What is a Colposcopy?**

Colposcopy means looking at the cervix with a microscope. This is carried out in the same way as your smear test. During the examination, solutions are applied to the cervix, which is then viewed through the microscope. The microscope does not touch you or go inside you, it just provides magnification so that any abnormal areas can be seen more clearly.

Colposcopy can be done safely during pregnancy.

## **3. What exactly happens in the clinic?**

Firstly, you are asked some questions relating to your periods, the type of contraception you use, previous smear history, any operations or illnesses you have had in the past and so on. You will then be asked to undress from the waist downwards and lie on the examination couch.

The colposcopy nurse will help you to position yourself on a special type of couch which has padded supports on which you rest your legs.

When you are lying comfortably the doctor will gently insert a speculum into your vagina, just as when you had your smear taken, in order to view the cervix through the microscope. A repeat smear is usually taken before applying solutions to the cervix that help to identify any abnormality.

If any abnormal area is seen a small sample of tissue – a biopsy – may be taken from the surface of the cervix. You may feel a slight pinching sensation. Alternatively the patch of abnormal surface cells on the cervix may be removed under local anaesthetic using a very fine heated wire loop.

## **4. What is a biopsy?**

It is the removal of a small sample of tissue from the cervix, for examination under a microscope. The biopsy allows for a sample of cells to be tested, for a more accurate assessment.

## **5. How long does a Colposcopy take?**

The colposcopy examination lasts approximately 10 minutes. Should treatment be carried out at the same time this may take a little longer.



## **6. Do I need anyone with me?**

You may wish to have your partner, a friend or relative to accompany you; they will not be present during the examination but a nurse will be present to provide support and help with any questions you may ask.

If you have young children you should try and arrange for someone to look after them rather than bring them to the clinic.

## **7. Can I go straight back to work/college?**

After the colposcopy examination you will be able to carry on as normal (this includes going back to work/college and driving). However, if you have had any treatment carried out it is advisable to take things easy for the rest of the day.

## **8. When is it safe to have intercourse?**

This depends on the type of treatment you have had, but avoiding intercourse for up to six weeks may be necessary to allow the cervix to heal fully. The doctor or nurse will advise you personally. At this time you will also be given information about what to expect in terms of vaginal discharge after treatment.

## **9. Can I eat and drink prior to Colposcopy?**

You can eat and drink as you would normally before your colposcopy. If you don't normally eat breakfast and have a morning appointment it is advisable to try to have at least a slice of toast.

## **10. What if my period is due?**

It is best to arrange your appointment after your period.

## **11. Are there any follow-up visits after treatment?**

The doctor will need to check how the treatment went. A check colposcopy and smear test is carried out usually six months after treatment. Thereafter you will be advised on the frequency of smear tests required. These follow-up checks are very important as some women may require a second treatment.