

Colposcopy

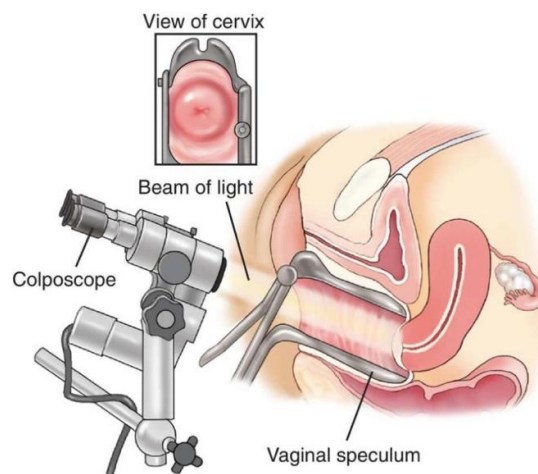
What is the Purpose of a Colposcopy?

A pap smear or a pap test is performed to look for abnormal cervical cells that could indicate, or potentially lead to cervical cancer. These abnormal cells are called "dysplasia" and can be mild ("low grade") to moderate or severe ("high grade"). Dysplasia itself is not something to be very concerned about. It is not a sign of cancer. However, it is a condition that has the potential to **lead** to cancer if not treated. For this reason, it is something that many doctors will want to investigate further. Other causes of dysplasia include chronic or recurrent infection, pregnancy or even the normal maturing of your body.

Therefore, in the case of an abnormal pap smear with "dysplasia" colposcopy is often the first step in investigating the cause and severity.

What is a Colposcope?

The colposcope is a microscope that the doctor uses to do your exam.



How is a Colposcopy Done?

The procedure to perform a colposcopy is very similar to that used for a pap test. The exception being that a colposcopy takes longer -- about 10-15 minutes.

While you are on the exam table, the doctor will insert a speculum to enable them to see your cervix.

The colposcope will reflect light along the speculum and will magnify what the doctor sees the same way a microscope does. This magnification will allow the doctor to diagnose the extent of the changes taking place.

The doctor may use a solution to swab over the cervix, which can sting a little. However, this allows any abnormal areas to become easier to see.

Will It Hurt?

No, the exam will not hurt. You may be uncomfortable with the speculum, like other vaginal exams.

A biopsy, a small sample of cells, may be taken. However, you will not have any pain, as the cervix has no nerve endings. Afterwards, you may have some cramping similar to menstrual cramps.

What If the Doctor Finds Something Wrong?

If the doctor does find a pre-cancerous condition, try not to worry. Cervical cancer takes a long time to develop (between 5 to 10 years) and the treatments available currently should prevent it from reaching that.

What treatment you have depends upon what the doctor actually finds. If any concerning abnormalities are found, you will be fully informed and the doctor will discuss appropriate treatment(s) with you.

You should know that cervical cancer has one of the **highest cure rates** of cancer when detected early.

What Will Happen Then?

If the doctor does not find anything to be concerned about, they will let you know. In most cases of dysplasia, the cells change back to normal on their own.

If you do require treatment, the doctor will advise you on the follow-up required.

What You Should Remember:

After reading this pamphlet you should remember:

1. Dysplasia is *not* cancer
2. Treatment is very successful
3. It's important that you get a regular pap test to help detect any changes that may occur.

If you have further questions regarding colposcopy or would like to see a health care provider regarding any sexual health matter, please contact us.

Planned Parenthood Sexual Health Questions? We Have Answers!

Location:

47 St. Clare Avenue, St. John's, NL, A1C 2J9

Hours:

Monday: 9am – 4:30pm
Tuesday: 9am – 4:30pm
Wednesday: 9am – 4:30pm
Thursday: 12pm – 6:00pm
Friday: 9am – 4:30pm

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709-579-1009
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