



What does an abnormal Pap test result mean?

An abnormal cervical cancer screening (Pap test) result means that cells have been found on your cervix that do not look normal. Abnormal results are common and do not mean that you have cancer or precancerous cells. Follow-up is recommended to determine the type of cell changes.

Is a colposcopy procedure painful?

The colposcopy itself should not be painful, but it may be uncomfortable. If a biopsy is taken during the procedure, you may experience pinching or cramping sensations.

What are the risks of having a colposcopy?

The risk of complications from colposcopy are small, however a biopsy can cause an infection or bleeding in rare instances.

Contact Us

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Any questions regarding the collection of the information by BC Cancer can be directed to the Operations Director, Cancer Screening (address: 801 – 686 West Broadway, Vancouver BC V5X 1G1, web: www.screeningbc.ca or email: screening@bccancer.bc.ca)

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Colposcopy

Answering your questions
about colposcopy



What happens during my colposcopy?

- 1 The exam starts off much like a Pap test: a specialist will use an instrument called a speculum to gently spread the vaginal walls to get a better look at the cervix.
- 2 Vinegar or iodine may be applied to your cervix to make any abnormalities more visible.
- 3 The specialist will then take tissue (biopsy) from your cervix for additional testing. The procedure is done in 5-10 minutes.

A speculum provides a better look at cervix.

Vinegar/iodine makes abnormalities on the cervix more visible.



Cervical biopsy forceps are used to take tissue from the cervix.

If you have recently had an abnormal Pap test result, your health care provider may recommend a follow-up colposcopy procedure.

See a video about the colposcopy procedure: www.screeningbc.ca/cervix

What is colposcopy?

Colposcopy is a procedure used to examine your cervix and vagina. A specialist will use a special microscope called a colposcope to look for abnormalities. During the colposcopy, the specialist may take tissue (biopsy) from any areas that appear abnormal.

What happens after the colposcopy?

There may be some spotting if a biopsy was taken which should stop within 24-48 hours. If a tampon is used to protect from spotting, ensure it is removed three hours after insertion. If you experience further spotting another tampon can be inserted or a pad may be used.

When will I get my results?

Your colposcopy results will be available within 2-4 weeks and a doctor will review them with you and discuss any next steps. Please call your doctor if you do not hear from them within four weeks.

Understanding the results of your colposcopy

Follow-up and next steps are determined by the types of cell changes that the colposcopy reveals:

Low-Grade

Minor cell changes that often correct themselves.

My colposcopy results show **low-grade** cell changes (cervical intraepithelial neoplasia grade 1, or CIN 1).
What should I do now?

Minor cell changes like CIN 1 often correct themselves. Treatment for CIN 1 is typically not needed. Your doctor will explain your colposcopy results and will let you know any next steps.

High-Grade

Cell changes that are pre-cancerous and need to be treated.

My colposcopy results show **high-grade** cell changes (cervical intraepithelial neoplasia grade 2 or 3, or CIN 2, CIN 3). What should I do next?

Your doctor will discuss the recommendation for a Loop Electrosurgical Excision Procedure (LEEP), which can be performed in the colposcopy clinic. If not treated, over time, CIN 2 and CIN 3 may become cancerous.