

# Colposcopy

Answering your questions about colposcopy

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

## 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 was used to prevent 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 your health care provider will review them with you and discuss any next steps. Please call your health care provider if you do not hear from them within four weeks.

## 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 your vaginal walls to get a better look at your 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.



Vinegar/iodine makes abnormalities on the cervix more visible.



A speculum provides a better look at the cervix.



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



See a video about the colposcopy procedure: [www.screeningbc.ca/cervix](http://www.screeningbc.ca/cervix)

## Understanding the results of your colposcopy

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

<p><b>LOW-GRADE</b> Minor cell changes that often correct themselves.</p>	<p><b>My colposcopy results show low-grade cell changes (cervical intraepithelial neoplasia grade 1, or CIN 1). What should I do now?</b></p> <p>Minor cell changes like CIN 1 often correct themselves. Treatment for CIN 1 is typically not needed. Your health care provider will explain your colposcopy results and will let you know any next steps.</p>
<p><b>HIGH-GRADE</b> Cell changes that are pre-cancerous and need to be treated.</p>	<p><b>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?</b></p> <p>Your health care provider 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.</p>

### **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, if any.

### **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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