

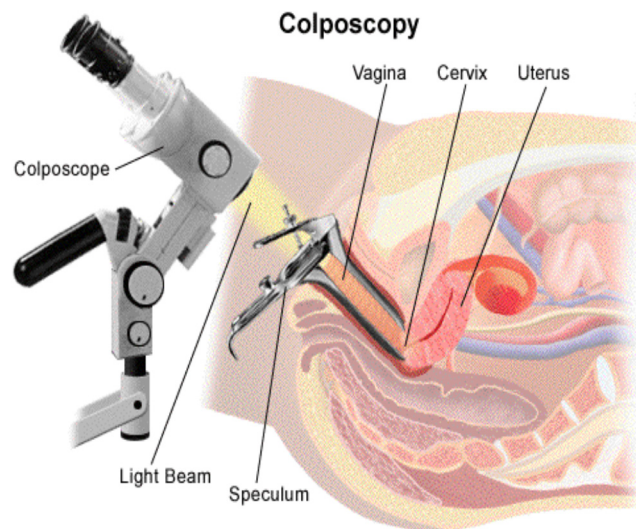
Colposcopy

by Cameron Greene, M.D.

My doctor has recommended that I have a colposcopy - what can I expect?

A colposcopy is a minor office procedure where the cervix, vagina, or vulvar areas are visualized with a special instrument called a colposcope. In it's simplest terms, it is analogous to looking at a freckle or mole on the skin with a magnifying glass. It is recommended when your health care provider either sees an obvious lesion that they want to get a closer look at or when an abnormality is identified on your pap smear result.

The day prior to having the procedure done, it's advisable to not douche, have sex, or use tampons. It's also best not to be on your period. Once in the exam room, you'll be placed in a position like you're having a pap smear. If the exam is of the cervix or vagina, a speculum will be placed to hold the vaginal walls apart to allow optimal visualization. A mild solution will be applied to the cervix or vagina with a cotton swab in order to identify any abnormal areas.



After looking at these areas with a colposcope, your provider may gently obtain some cells from the inner portion of the cervical canal through a process called an endocervical curettage. After this it may also be recommended that a small pinch biopsy be performed on any areas that are in question. Any discomfort associated with this portion of this procedure is generally mild and often describes as being similar to a slight cramp.

The tissue obtained is sent to the laboratory and, once evaluated, the results will be discussed with you to determine whether further testing or treatment is necessary.

Following your procedure, you should feel fine. There may be some slight cramping or vaginal soreness for a few days but that should not prohibit normal activities. A small amount of spotting or dark discharge is not uncommon following a biopsy, especially if medication is used on the biopsy site. For a few days you should avoid douching, tampons and sex. Call your physicians if you have vaginal bleeding, severe pain, fever or a foul discharge.

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