



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND UNIVERSITY HEALTH CENTER

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Colposcopy Fact Sheet

As you have been told, your last Pap smear was “abnormal.” This means you should have further testing to find out the location and severity of the abnormal cells. We do these tests in our Women’s Health Clinic at the University Health Center using colposcopy.

As a screening test, a Pap smear may not give the complete picture. With the help of an instrument called a colposcope, a biopsy (tissue sample) can be taken. This helps the doctor plan your treatment.

What is a colposcope?

A colposcope is an instrument mounted on a stand and used to look at the cervix (mouth of the womb) and vagina through a low-power microscope.

What is colposcopy?

Colposcopy is a painless examination of the cervix and vagina with a low-power microscope. This exam is usually done between menstrual periods and generally takes less than ten minutes. A woman lies down in the position used to take a Pap smear and a speculum is put in the vagina to give a view of the cervix and vagina.

Why is a woman advised to have an exam with a colposcope?

If the cervix looks abnormal or if a Pap smear shows the presence of abnormal cells, colposcopy may help in the diagnosis and in the planning of treatment.

It may be difficult to find out the condition of the cervix by simply looking with the naked eye. If abnormal cells are found, a colposcopic exam can be used to decide from which areas of the cervix a biopsy should be taken.

What is a biopsy of the cervix?

A biopsy of the cervix is the removal of a small piece (or pieces) of tissue from the cervix using a specially designed instrument. We may need to do this at our clinic during colposcopy. This tissue is then sent to a laboratory where it is examined under a

high power microscope and a diagnosis sent to our clinic.

Is a biopsy painful?

Most women describe the procedure as feeling like a sharp pinch. Some experience a menstrual-type cramp. There may be slight spotting or bleeding for a few days after a cervical biopsy.

What treatment will I need?

Sometimes the examination shows that no treatment is needed, only further follow-up. If minor treatment is needed, we may provide it at our clinic. In the event your condition required more evaluation or treatment than we can provide, we will refer you to a specialist for further treatment.

Your appointment is

Day _____
Date _____
Time _____

at the University Health Center,
Women’s Health Clinic.

Due to the testing done at this time, it is important that you do not douche, have sexual intercourse, use vaginal medication, tampons or use a diaphragm two days before your examination. Do not put anything into your vagina for one week after a biopsy. This includes abstaining from sexual intercourse, tampon use, vaginal medications, douching and tub baths.

If you are unable to keep this appointment, please call (301) 314-8190 and reschedule so that we may schedule another patient in your place.

Revised 8.05

Published for the University of Maryland community.

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