

After the colposcopy

After the colposcopy examination you will be able to carry on as normal (this includes going back to work or college and driving). However, if you have had any treatment, you should take things easy for the rest of the day.

When is it safe to have sex again?

If you had treatment during your colposcopy, you may need to avoid sex for up to six weeks to allow the cervix to heal fully. The doctor or nurse will advise you personally. They will also give you information about what to expect in terms of vaginal discharge after treatment.

Can I eat and drink before my colposcopy?

You can eat and drink as you would normally before your colposcopy. Try to have eaten something before your appointment.

What if my period is due?

It is recommended that you still attend your appointment if you have your period or it is due. You should contact the clinic if you have any questions.

Are there any follow-up visits after treatment?

You will need to return for a follow-up visit for the doctor or nurse to check how the treatment went. These follow-up checks are very important, as some women may require a second treatment. At your colposcopy appointment the doctor or nurse will give follow-up advice on how often you need smear tests in the future.

Colposcopy



Cervical screening saves lives.

What is CervicalCheck?

CervicalCheck – The National Cervical Screening Programme is a Government-funded service that provides free smear tests to women aged 25 to 60.

What is a colposcopy?

A colposcopy is a simple examination that is carried out the same way as a smear test. A doctor or nurse will look at the cervix using a type of microscope called a colposcope. During the examination, a liquid or dye may be applied to the cervix to help identify any changes to the cells. A colposcopy can be done safely during pregnancy.

Before the colposcopy, the doctor or nurse should explain:

- the colposcopy examination,
- the possible treatments for abnormal cell changes, and
- any risks linked to the treatment.

Why do I need a Colposcopy?

Please do not worry. This does not mean that you have cancer. You have been advised to have a colposcopy examination because your smear test showed signs of changes in the cells of your cervix (the neck of the womb).

These cell changes give early warning that cervical cancer might develop if the cells are left untreated.

The colposcopy examination allows the doctor or nurse to decide if you need treatment.

For some women, these cell changes return to normal on their own. Other women may need treatment to the cervix. This treatment can usually be carried out in the colposcopy clinic.

How will I get my colposcopy appointment?

Your doctor (GP) will write a letter of referral to a colposcopy clinic. This referral and appointment are part of the CervicalCheck programme and are free of charge. The colposcopy clinic will send you details of your appointment within a few weeks. If you decide to be referred as a private patient using your private health insurance you will have to pay a fee.

About a colposcopy appointment

The doctor or nurse will ask you about:

- your previous smear test history,
- any operations or illnesses you have had in the past, and
- other aspects of your health.

You will then be asked to undress from the waist down and lie on the examination couch. The nurse will help you to position yourself on a special type of couch that has padded supports to rest your legs.

When you are lying comfortably, the doctor or nurse will gently insert a speculum into your vagina, just as when you had your smear test taken, so they can look at the cervix through the colposcope. The colposcope does not touch you or go inside you, it just magnifies the area so that any abnormal areas or cell changes can be seen more clearly.

If the doctor or nurse sees any abnormal area, they may take a small sample of tissue from the surface of your cervix. This is called a cervical biopsy. You may feel a slight pinching sensation. Alternatively, the doctor may remove a patch of abnormal surface cells on the cervix

under local anaesthetic using a very fine, heated wire loop. Cell changes on the cervix can be described as low grade and high grade. If you have any questions about your result contact your smearer (the doctor or nurse who took your test).

What is a cervical biopsy?

A cervical biopsy is the removal of a sample of tissue from the cervix for examination under a microscope. These cells will then be tested so they can be assessed more accurately.

How long does a colposcopy take?

The colposcopy examination lasts about 10 minutes. If you get treatment at the same time, it may take a little longer.

Do I need anyone with me?

You may wish to have your partner, a friend or relative with you. A nurse will be there to provide support and answer any questions you may have. If you have young children, you should try and arrange for someone to look after them rather than bring them to the clinic.

