

A colposcopy is a diagnostic tool that allows the physician to view the cervix under a microscope (colposcope) to help detect abnormalities in the cervical cells. For more information, please call our office for an appointment to discuss this procedure with a medical doctor.

**Why is it done:**

- A colposcopy is an office procedure that is performed when a patient has an abnormal pap smear and/or has a positive high risk Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) detected. As pap smears are only a screening tool, a colposcopy further evaluates the abnormal pap smear by looking through a microscope (colposcope) to directly visualize the cervix.
- A colposcopy can also be performed to assess other issues such as abnormal bleeding, genital warts, cervicitis (inflammation of the cervix), and benign growths such as polyps. A colposcopy may also be performed of other parts of the genitalia such as the vagina, vulva and peri-rectal areas.

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**What can I expect if I have the procedure:**

- A colposcopy is similar to having a long pap smear. Using large Q-tips, the physician will place vinegar on your cervix and visualize the cervix using the colposcope. Abnormal cells on the cervix show white changes when exposed to vinegar. The physician will also look for abnormal blood vessel patterns on the cervix. One or more biopsies may be taken of the cervix and cells from the cervical opening. You may experience a pinching or cramping sensation during the time the biopsy is taken. This tissue will be sent to pathology for analysis and a diagnosis will be given to your physician. Further treatment will be determined by the results of your biopsy.
  - If the biopsy shows a "low-grade" abnormality, current recommendations are to watch the areas as there is a high likelihood these cells could return to normal. If biopsies show a "high-grade" abnormality, a woman will typically be offered a LEEP procedure which is done in the office under a local anesthetic.
  - It is advised that you take Ibuprofen (Advil) or Acetaminophen (Tylenol) one hour prior to the procedure as some cramping may occur.
  - You should not have this procedure if you think you may be pregnant.
  - You should not use tampons, vaginal medications, douche, or have sexual intercourse for 48 hour prior to the procedure.
  - It is best to have this procedure done immediately following your menstrual period. This procedure cannot be done if you are having your period. However, if you are spotting, the procedure can still be done.
  - Most women with an abnormal pap smear will not develop cervical cancer with regular pap smears and early intervention.
  - Remember, this procedure is a diagnostic tool, not a treatment for your abnormal pap smear. Biopsy results will determine whether or not you will need additional treatment. It is very important that you keep all of your follow up visits as directed by your physician.
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