

# Colposcopy

*Taking a closer look at your cervix*

A **colposcopy** is an exam that uses a special tool to give a close-up view of your cervix and vagina. It looks for any abnormal cells in the area to find signs of cervical cancer.

## Colposcopies Can Help Detect and Prevent Cervical Problems

Your doctor may suggest a colposcopy if you have an abnormal Pap test result. This does not have to mean that you have cancer; you may just have a small problem with your cervix. A colposcopy can tell you more and help your doctor decide if you need more testing or treatment.

Don't be afraid or embarrassed to get a colposcopy—it can help detect and prevent cancer and other problems before they get too serious. The sooner problems are found, the more likely the treatments will work.



## Preparing for Your Colposcopy

Do not place anything into your vagina or have vaginal sex one week before the exam.

## During a Colposcopy: What to Expect

The exam takes about 10 minutes. You may feel uncomfortable. Let your doctor know what you want to change to make you feel more comfortable.

- You lie on the exam table, just as for a Pap test.
- A tool is put into your vagina to open it wider. You may feel some pressure.
- Your doctor wipes your vagina with a vinegar-like liquid that makes it easier for your doctor to see inside. You may feel a sting.
- A special tool called a colposcope is placed right outside your vagina to get a better view of the inside.
- Sometimes, the doctor may take a sample of your cells to study them more closely. You may feel some pinching or cramping before and after the sample is taken.

## Your Colposcopy Results: What's Next?

### Normal Results

You do not need treatment if your results are normal. Your provider may ask you to repeat a Pap test in 6-12 months to make sure your cells stay normal.

### Abnormal Results

Abnormal cells may turn into cancer later on if they are not treated early. To keep a tight watch and control over the cells, your doctor may suggest:

- Monitoring the abnormal cells to see if they heal themselves. They will be checked closely with more Pap tests and/or other tests.
- Getting a procedure to remove the abnormal cells. Your doctor will discuss your options with you.

**Keep getting regular Pap tests and pelvic exams, whether or not you need treatment.** Even if your abnormal cells have been treated, they may return later on. The Pap test can help spot problems early so that you can get treated right away.

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