

Patient Information Leaflet

Colposcopy Referral

Colposcopy

You have been told that your cervical smear result has shown some abnormal cells or a viral infection with human papilloma virus (HPV). This means that your cervix (neck of the womb) needs closer inspection. This does not mean you have cancer.

Your GP has referred you for an examination called Colposcopy. This is an examination of the cervix, which takes about 15 minutes and involves looking at the neck of womb (cervix) with a magnifying instrument - a colposcope.

You will be examined with a speculum, exactly the same instrument as when you have your smear taken.

Instead of taking a smear, a special stain is applied to the cervix with a cotton wool bud. Sometimes a small biopsy may be necessary, this is where a piece of tissue is taken from the neck of the womb which feels like a "pinch".

At the time of your colposcopy, the doctor can assess whether treatment is required, and this will be explained to you and discussed at the time of examination.

If the examination confirms the presence of abnormal cells, this may be:

1. Mild changes, which revert to normal with no treatment but will be kept under review either by colposcopy or more frequent smears.
2. More severe changes which have the potential to turn into cancer cells if left untreated. This is a process that can take several years. Treatment at this stage is likely to prevent longer-term problems.

This information leaflet is to help allay any anxieties you may have about the procedure.

We will be pleased to answer any further questions you may have in more detail when you attend for an appointment.

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