

Colposcopy

What is a Colposcopy?

Colposcopy is the name given to the procedure when the cervix (the neck of the womb) is examined using a colposcope. A colposcope is a low-power microscope on a stand. The doctor looks through the colposcope to examine the cervix.

Why is it done?

It is usually done when abnormal cells have been found on a Pap smear. These cells need to be looked at in more detail. The reason for following up abnormal pap smears is that a small proportion may be, or may develop, into cancer.

How is it done?

A speculum is put into the vagina so that the cervix can be seen. The doctor then looks through the colposcope. The cervix may be lightly wiped with some liquid to highlight the cell changes on the cervix. Then a tiny snip of the cervix (a biopsy) might need to be done. This examination usually takes about ten minutes.

Does it hurt?

Colposcopy is not painful but it may be uncomfortable having a speculum inside the vagina for ten minutes. It feels similar to having a Pap smear, except it takes a bit longer.

How do I make an appointment for a colposcopy?

Colposcopy clinics are available in the public and private Brisbane Health Systems.

A referral from a doctor or nurse practitioner is needed so they should be able to tell you who to contact.

Other things to know?

- It is preferable that you do not have your period at the time of a colposcopy.
- If you are allergic to iodine you need to let the nurse or doctor know.
- Let the doctor know if you might be pregnant.
- If you have a biopsy done there may be some blood spotting over the next few days.
- It is advisable to not have sex or use a tampon during this time as this can increase the chance of you getting an infection.

