

Families Division

Colposcopy Explained

Advice for Patients



Options available

If you'd like a large print, audio, Braille or a translated version of this leaflet then please call:

01253 955588

Our Four Values:

People Centred

Positive

Compassion

Excellence

What does Colposcopy Mean?

Colposcopy is the examination of the cervix (neck of the womb), vagina and/or vulva using a special microscope. The microscope does not go inside you, it lights up and makes the area for examination look bigger. By using a special solution, the doctor or nurse may be able to spot any abnormal cells.

Why have I been asked to the Colposcopy Clinic?

You may have had an abnormal smear and it is important that we inspect the neck of the womb carefully to see if there is an abnormal area, which could explain the smear findings. We are not looking for cancer in the vast majority of patients, we are looking for a type of precancer that may sometimes develop into cancer if it is left untreated for a long time. Other reasons for a colposcopy may be the abnormal appearance of the cervix or vulva, even though the smear was "normal". It may be possible to treat a polyp at the neck of the womb during a colposcopy.

What happens when I come for my colposcopy appointment?

At your first visit to the Colposcopy Unit, you will be asked about your medical history and we will explain why your appointment is necessary. The staff in the clinic will be happy to try and answer any questions you may have.

Once you fully understand the procedure the doctor/nurse will place an instrument in the vagina just as your GP or Practice Nurse did when you had your smear taken.

The cervix will be examined using the microscope and to highlight any abnormal areas we will apply solutions to your cervix.

A biopsy (a small piece of tissue) may need to be taken from the cervix. We will discuss this with you before proceeding. During a biopsy you may feel a "pinching" sensation. There should be very little, if any, discomfort.

What should I do if I'm having a period on the day of my appointment?

It may be difficult to see the cervix clearly if you are having a period on the day of your appointment, please ring the unit on 01253 955534 / 953488 so we can change your appointment to another day.

If I need treatment

If, when we examine you the neck of your womb looks like it needs treatment it can be done at your first visit, usually under local anaesthetic. At other times it is necessary to wait for your biopsy result. In certain cases it is decided that your treatment should be carried out in theatre. Whatever your plan of care it will be fully explained to you during your visit.

Please talk these options over with the doctor/nurse in the unit. It is important any problems or concerns you may have are sorted out right away.

If you have a coil in place, we would recommend avoiding unprotected sexual intercourse for at least 7 days prior to your appointment. This is a precaution in case treatment is needed at your first visit or if you are returning for treatment. This is to reduce the risk of unplanned pregnancy should the coil be removed/changed to enable treatment.

Are there any risks associated with treatment?

There is a small risk of bleeding and infection. There may be a small risk of pre-term delivery in the future. It is a matter of removing abnormal cells whilst keeping possible future risks to a minimum. Please discuss any concerns with your Colposcopist.

When will I receive my examination results?

A copy of your results will be sent to you and your GP (usually 4-6 weeks). We will inform you if we are intending to carry out a treatment at your next visit or, if you have already had a treatment carried out, when and where your follow up will be.

Will I have problems with bleeding after a biopsy?

Discharge/bleeding is usual during your recovery. The timescale of which very much depends on the treatment you have had. An appropriate advice sheet is given at the end of your visit.

What should I do if I have any problems after the procedure?

Please telephone for advice if, after your colposcopy, you have:-

- Heavy bleeding.
- Offensive discharge.
- Fever/chills.

Is there anyone I can talk to if I'm worried or have some more questions about the procedure?

If you are in any doubts about your treatment or want any further advice and information, please telephone 01253 955534 / 953488 to speak to the secretary or clinic staff.

Useful contact details

Colposcopy Secretary's Office:
01253 955534 /953488

Hospital Switchboard: **01253 300000**

Patient Relations Department

The Patient Relations Department offer impartial advice and deal with any concerns or complaints the Trust receives. You can contact them via:

Tel: **01253 955589**

email: **patient.relations@bfwh.nhs.uk**

You can also write to us at:

Patient Relations Department, Blackpool Victoria Hospital, Whinney Heys Road, Blackpool FY3 8NR

Further information is available on our website:

www.bfwh.nhs.uk

References

This leaflet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this leaflet are available on request from:

Policy Co-ordinator/Archivist 01253 953397

Approved by: Women's Health
Date of Publication: 25/01/2016
Reference No: Ic00010456 - PL/105 V2
Author: Adele Whitehead
Review Date: 01/01/2019

