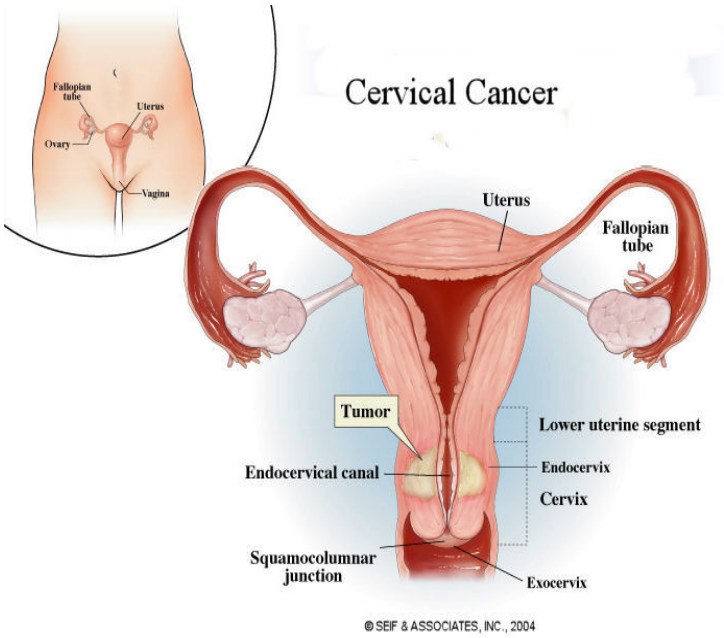
Colposcopy

Colposcopy is a procedure that uses a special lighted microscope (*colposcope*). It examines your cervix and vagina, or the area around the outside of the vagina, for signs of disease or abnormalities in the cells. You may be sent to a specialist (*gynecologist*) to do the colposcopy. A biopsy (*tissue sample*) may be collected during a colposcopy, if the caregiver finds any unusual cells. The biopsy is sent to the lab for further testing, and the results are reported back to your caregiver.

A WOMAN MAY NEED THIS PROCEDURE IF:

- She has had an abnormal pap smear (*taking cells from the cervix for testing*).
- She has a sore on her cervix, and a Pap test was normal.
- The Pap test suggests human papilloma virus (HPV). This virus can cause genital warts and is linked to the development of cervical cancer.
- She has genital warts on the cervix, or in or around the outside of the vagina.
- Her mother took the drug DES while pregnant.
- She has painful intercourse.
- She has vaginal bleeding, especially after sexual intercourse.
- There is a need to evaluate the results of previous treatment.



BEFORE THE PROCEDURE

- Colposcopy is done when you are not having a menstrual period.
- For 24 hours before the colposcopy, **do not**:
  - Douche.
  - Use tampons.
  - Use medicines, creams, or suppositories in the vagina.
  - Have sexual intercourse.

PROCEDURE

- A colposcopy is done while a woman is lying on her back with her feet in foot rests (*stirrups*).
- A speculum is placed inside the vagina to keep it open and to allow the caregiver to see the cervix. This is the same instrument used to do a pap smear.
- The colposcope is placed outside the vagina. It is used to magnify and examine the cervix, vagina, and the area around the outside of the vagina.
- A small amount of liquid solution is placed on the area that is to be viewed. This solution is placed on with a cotton applicator. This solution makes it easier to see the abnormal cells.
- Your caregiver will suck out mucus and cells from the canal of the cervix.
- Small pieces of tissue for biopsy may be taken at the same time. You may feel mild pain or discomfort when this is done.
- Your caregiver will record the location of the abnormal areas and send the tissue samples to a lab for analysis.
- If your caregiver biopsies the vagina or outside of the vagina, a local anesthetic (*novocaine*) is usually given.

AFTER THE PROCEDURE

- You may have some cramping that often goes away in a few minutes. You may have some soreness for a couple of days.

- You may take over-the-counter pain medicine as advised by your caregiver. Do not take aspirin because it can cause bleeding.
- Lie down for a few minutes if you feel lightheaded.
- You may have some bleeding or dark discharge that should stop in a few days.
- You may need to wear a sanitary pad for a few days.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Avoid sex, douching, and using tampons for a week or as directed.
- Only take medicine as directed by your caregiver.
- Continue to take birth control pills, if you are on them.
- Not all test results are available during your visit. If your test results are not back during the visit, make an appointment with your caregiver to find out the results. Do not assume everything is normal if you have not heard from your caregiver or the medical facility. It is important for you to follow up on all of your test results.
- Follow your caregiver's advice regarding medicines, activity, follow-up visits, and follow-up Pap tests.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop a rash.
- You have problems with your medicine.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IMMEDIATELY IF YOU:

- Are bleeding heavily or are passing blood clots.
- Develop a fever over 102° F (38.9° C), with or without chills.
- Have abnormal vaginal discharge.
- Are having cramps that do not go away after taking your pain medicine.
- Feel lightheaded, dizzy, or faint.
- Develop stomach pain.

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