

## What happens if I am referred for a Colposcopy?

Your GP has referred you to a Specialist for a follow-up test called a Colposcopy - this is an examination of your cervix using a colposcope (like binoculars) to get a magnified view of your cervix.

To have a colposcopy test, your specialist will ask you to lie on an examination bed with your legs supported, in a similar position to when you had a Cervical Screening Test (CST), then insert a vaginal speculum with the colposcope placed between your knees. The specialist will then put dilute vinegar onto your cervix to potentially highlight any abnormal areas and then look through the colposcope to carefully examine your cervix. The colposcope itself does not enter your body.

This examination usually takes less than 10 minutes and most people do not experience any pain. However, you may have some discomfort from having the speculum inside your vagina. It is fine to ask as many questions about the test as you like.

## What is a Biopsy?

If areas of your cervix appear abnormal during a colposcopy test, the specialist may take a small sample of tissue to send to a laboratory for testing. This is a biopsy.

If you have a biopsy, you may experience some pain for a few seconds. Avoid rigorous exercise for 24 hours after and it is best to avoid sexual intercourse for one to two days. You can shower, but avoid swimming, bathing and spas for one to two days.

You may have some discharge and 'spotting' for a few hours afterwards, so it is a good idea to take a thin sanitary pad or panty liner to the appointment.

It may take a couple of weeks for the results of your biopsy. A follow-up appointment or letter will be organized for yourself and your GP to receive the results of any biopsy. If the results are normal or only minor changes are noted, follow-up with your GP in twelve months will be recommended.

## Treatment for Abnormal Cells

If significant abnormal cells are found during your colposcopy, further treatment may be discussed.

## Wire Loop Excision

During this procedure, the abnormal cells are removed from your cervix with a wire loop. The procedure takes 15 to 20 minutes. Usually this is performed under a light general anaesthetic.

## Cone Biopsy

This is an operation for removing a slightly larger cone-shaped section of tissue from the cervix containing the abnormal cells and is performed under general anaesthetic.

## Further Reading

<http://www.cancerscreening.gov.au/internet/screening/publishing.nsf/Content/about-the-test-results#2>