

Colposcopy

Outpatient Clinic

To your appointment could you bring your completed 'Patient Registration Form'.

What is a colposcopy?

A colposcopy is a procedure that uses a special microscope (a colposcope) to look into the vagina and to look at the cervix (opening to the uterus or womb), vaginal and vulval area.

The colposcope is like a pair of binoculars mounted on a stand and connected to a powerful light. It magnifies the tissue and enables the doctor to see abnormalities that cannot be seen with the naked eye.

The procedure takes approximately 10 to 15 minutes.

Why have a colposcopy?

A colposcopy is usually done when a woman has an abnormal Pap smear. However you should remember that most abnormal Pap smears are not cancer, and your abnormal results are most likely caused by an inflammation or infection.

What happens during the procedure?

- You lie on an examination bed like you do for a Pap smear.
- Your legs will be on supports to allow better vision of the cervix.
- A speculum is inserted into your vagina.
- The doctor looks through the colposcope. The machine DOES NOT touch you.
- Another Pap smear may be taken.
- Your cervix is then washed with a weak vinegar solution that may sting a little. The solution can help show the abnormal areas clearer.
- Sometimes a biopsy (a small tissue sample the size of a breadcrumb) of the cervix is taken and sent to pathology for further investigation.
- You may notice some slight discomfort.

What happens after the procedure?

- Following the taking of a biopsy some light bleeding may occur.
- Spotting sometimes lasts for several days. Use panty liners if necessary. During this time DO NOT use tampons.
- Abstain from sexual intercourse until any discharge stops.

Contact your GP or KEMH Emergency Department (9340 1433) if:

- you have any heavy bleeding,
- offensive discharge, or
- are concerned.

The biopsy results will be forwarded to you and your GP in 3 to 4 weeks. If further treatment is required you will be informed at this stage and an appointment will be sent to you.

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