

What Is a Colposcopy?

Colposcopy is a way for a gynecologist to get a close-up view of the cervix (the opening to the uterus). A colposcope is like binoculars on a stand with a bright light, or a small camera. It doesn't touch your body.

When Should Colposcopy Be Done?

It should be done on a day when you do not have your period or the bleeding is very light.

How Do We Do a Colposcopy?

You lay down in the same way you would for a Pap test. We will put a speculum into your vagina. After that, we will wash your cervix with vinegar-soaked cotton balls, followed by a temporary brown iodine-based dye. These help us to see (through the colposcope) any parts of the cervix and/or vagina that are not normal. Colposcopy typically takes about 5-10 minutes.

What Does a Colposcopy Feel Like?

- You may feel pressure when we put the speculum in.
- You may feel a little burning when we wash the cervix with vinegar.

What Is a Biopsy?

Sometimes, the cervix will look normal. If a part of it doesn't, the provider will pinch and/or scrape off one or more tiny samples to send to a lab. This is called a biopsy. Often, a person will need more than one biopsy.

How Do They Do a Biopsy?

There are three types of biopsies. One is taken from the surface or outside of the cervix. Another is taken from the inside of the opening of the cervix. A third is taken from the vaginal wall. We send the samples to a lab to be tested by a doctor there. The lab sends the test results back to Vermont Gynecology, and we will share them with you. We use the results to decide if you need more tests or treatment.

What Does a Biopsy Feel Like?

- You may feel a pinch if we take a biopsy from the outside of the cervix and/or the vagina. It may be slight or sharp.
- You may feel cramps if we take a biopsy from inside the opening of the cervix. They may be mild or severe.
- Most people feel little or no cramps afterwards.

You may have a little spotting or bleeding for a few days after a biopsy. You may have a dark coffee ground-like discharge from the vagina for a few days. It is caused by a medicine that we may put on the area of the biopsy.

Why Have a Colposcopy?

A colposcopy may be done when you have:

- a Pap test that is not normal
- a positive HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) test
- an area on the cervix that does not look normal
- certain other medical problem

Colposcopy and biopsy give more information than other tests. If a Pap or HPV test shows that there may be a problem, a colposcopy and/or biopsy can tell us more.

Risks

It is rare to have problems after a biopsy. You might have:

- heavy bleeding that needs to be treated in the clinic, an emergency room, or the hospital
- an infection that needs to be treated

Colposcopy and biopsy are like many other tests. They can sometimes give a wrong result.

Other Choices

There is no other test that will give you and your provider the same information as a colposcopy and biopsy.

Preparing for a Colposcopy

- Starting 2 days/48 hours prior to the procedure, there should be nothing placed in the vagina, including no tampons, douching, or intercourse.
- Unless your provider has given you alternate instructions, we recommend 600 mg of ibuprofen taken about an hour before your procedure with food. You may also take acetaminophen 1000 mg, too.
- If you start menstruating or spotting on or before the day of your procedure, call our office and speak to our nurse to determine whether or not you need to reschedule.
- It is very important to avoid any chance of pregnancy at the time of your procedure. Unless your risk of pregnancy is zero, please abstain from intercourse (if relevant) for 14 days prior to your procedure. Otherwise, we will need to reschedule your procedure. Please ask your provider if you have any questions or concerns about this.

After Colposcopy

- If you *don't* have a biopsy, you can start having vaginal sex whenever you want.
- If you *do* have a biopsy, wait about one week to allow the cervix to heal before having vaginal sex.
- Take your medicines as usual. This includes your birth control, if applicable.
- You may shower or bathe as soon as you want.
- You may use a tampon, unless you are told otherwise at the time of the colposcopy.

WARNING SIGNS — call the office if you have:

- bleeding that's heavier than spotting — unless you think it's your period
- severe pain in the lower part of your abdomen
- fever or chills
- heavy, yellow, or foul-smelling discharge from your vagina

Further Treatment

Sometimes colposcopy and biopsy results show that you don't need treatment right away. Sometimes they show that you will need more tests later. If you need treatment, you can usually receive it at Vermont Gynecology. If not, we will help you make an appointment with another doctor.

Vermont Gynecology Office phone number: 802-735-1252

AFTER HOURS EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBER: 802-350-1260

Patient signature

Date

I witness that the client received this information, understood it, and had an opportunity to ask questions.

Witness signature

Date

Witness name (please print)