

COLPOSCOPY

Why Colposcopy Is Recommended:

Colposcopy is a diagnostic tool that allows us to better evaluate abnormal PAP smears. The Pap smear is the most common screening test performed to check for abnormalities of the cervix. If a Pap smear indicates that changes have occurred on the lining of the cervix that may be pre-cancerous, the cervix is better evaluated by colposcopy. A colposcope is similar to a powerful magnifying glass that gives us a close-up view of the surface layer of the cervix.

How is Colposcopy Performed:

When performing colposcopy, a speculum will be placed into the vagina. The cervix will be wiped clean with a large Q-tip and the cervix will be painted with acetic acid (vinegar). You may notice a mild burning sensation after application of acetic acid. The colposcope will then be used to examine the cervix. Acetic acid makes abnormal cells more visible by dehydrating them. When the cells are dehydrated, they turn white and are seen more easily when looked at with the colposcope's green filter. If an abnormal area of the cervix is identified, a small piece of the lining of the cervix will be biopsied (you'll feel a little pinch) and sent to a Pathologist for further evaluation. Results will be available in approximately one (1) week. **IF YOU HAVE MITRAL VALVE PROLAPSE, YOU WILL NEED TO TAKE PROPHYLACTIC ANTIBIOTICS. PLEASE LET US KNOW BEFORE WE BEGIN.**

Benefits, Risks and Alternatives:

The benefit of this procedure is that, unlike the Pap Smear, which only suggests the presence of an abnormality, colposcopy with or without biopsy provides definitive diagnosis of dysplasia, a pre-cancerous change of the cervix. This allows for our patient's cervical changes to be treated appropriately to avoid progression to cancer. The risks are minimal, but include bleeding which is usually stopped by chemical cauterizing agents. In addition, there is a very remote chance of developing an infection that would need to be treated with antibiotics.

The alternative to colposcopy would be either expectant management with follow-up Pap smears or a much more aggressive surgical procedure called a LEEP / cone biopsy. For some changes in the cervix, follow-up Pap smears would be very appropriate.

After Care:

Following the colposcopy, there should be minimal discomfort. Some mild cramping may be expected and relieved with Advil or other mild over-the-counter pain relievers. A discharge consisting of old blood and dried chemical cautery agent may be expected for several days following the colposcopic procedure. There should be no other unusual side effects. We will either call you with results or have you come back for a visit depending on your particular situation.