

You have been invited to attend the colposcopy clinic as your cervical smear test taken recently has shown changes called 'Dyskaryosis' in the cells of your cervix (neck of the womb). This does **NOT** mean that you have cancer. We will offer to carry out an examination of the cervix (a colposcopy) at this visit.

Please read the information on this leaflet and contact the colposcopy clinic on 01234 792007 or Lesley Gillon, colposcopy nurse via switchboard 01234 355122 on extension 4426 or bleep 500 if you have any questions. You will also have the opportunity to discuss any queries during your visit.

A colposcopy examination

A colposcopy is a thorough look at the cervix (neck of the womb) using a microscope which magnifies the cervix. It does not go inside you and enables the doctor to examine the cervix more closely. A speculum is used as in a smear test. A weak vinegar solution or iodine solution is used to show up any areas which may need further investigation i.e. a biopsy. The visit lasts about 20 minutes and you will be able to watch the procedure on a TV screen if you wish.

Dyskaryosis

This is the medical term for abnormal cells in the cervix. Dyskaryosis is divided into low grade and high grade. **It is NOT cancer.** The laboratory usually informs your GP and the colposcopy clinic when a smear shows dyskaryosis and an appointment for a colposcopy is arranged.

Causes of Dyskaryosis

Most abnormalities in smears are caused by a virus called **Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)**. Around 70% of men and women are exposed to this virus at some time in their lives, usually during sexual contact. It is **NOT** associated with promiscuity. Men are usually unaffected while some women have a strain of the virus which can cause changes to the cells of the cervix. The purpose of the smear test is to pick up these early changes so they can be treated if necessary. Often, and especially with low grade smears, the virus disappears without the need for any treatment.

How can I get rid of the HPV?

Antibiotics do not work against viruses. Not smoking and having a healthy diet will boost your immune system and can help clear this virus.

Having a biopsy

A small piece of skin is removed from the cervix and tested for a condition called cervical intraepithelial neoplasia (CIN) in the lab. This helps to decide whether treatment is needed. The procedure may sting slightly but should not be too painful. You will usually receive results of the biopsy by post with a plan of further care in about three weeks.

CIN

CIN is the term used for abnormalities found on a biopsy. Like dyskaryosis, it is divided into low grade and high grade. If low grade CIN is found, treatment will not usually be needed however you may be asked to return to the clinic in six months for another smear. There is a small chance that high grade changes will be found and that you will be advised of treatment to **prevent** cancer of the cervix in the future. This treatment is called a 'loop biopsy' as described below.

Treatment

You may be offered treatment at your first visit, however the doctor/nurse will only perform treatment if you are happy to proceed.

The treatment is called a 'loop biopsy'. A small wire loop is used to remove a small piece of skin from the cervix. This is carried out in the clinic using local anaesthetic whilst you are awake. Around 95% of women have this treatment under local anaesthetic but if you are very nervous or if the doctor recommends a general anaesthetic then this method will be discussed with you.

If treatment is needed, the doctor or nurse will explain the procedure to you at your appointment

Frequently asked questions

Do I need to bring someone with me for my first appointment?

You do not need to bring someone with you but are most welcome to do so if you wish.

Can I come if I have a period?

We usually perform this visit when you are not on a period but please ring us to discuss this further if you wish to do.

Can I drive after a colposcopy?

You should be able to drive after colposcopy even after a biopsy or treatment has been performed. You may wish to rest for about 20-30 minutes if you have been given a local anaesthetic into the neck of your womb.

How will I get my results?

If you have had a smear or a biopsy performed, we usually write to you in about three weeks to inform you of results and follow up plans.

If you have any queries which have not been addressed in this leaflet, please contact the colposcopy clinic directly on 01234 792007 or Lesley Gillon, colposcopy nurse via the main hospital switchboard 01234 355122 on ext. 4426 or bleep 500.

Useful websites:

www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk

www.bsccp.org.uk