

Colposcopy clinic – what to expect at your visit

You have been referred to Bendigo Health’s colposcopy clinic by your GP or nurse practitioner. This handout is designed to explain what to expect during your visit to the clinic.

If you have any concerns about your upcoming appointment, or are unable to attend, please call Women’s Health Clinic on (03) 5454 7288.

When is a colposcopy needed?

Colposcopy is recommended if your Cervical Screening Test (CST) results suggest you may be at an increased risk of developing cervical cancer. This may be because the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) has been detected, or the smear is showing some abnormal appearing cells.

Colposcopy is sometimes recommended if your doctor has a concern about how your cervix looks, or if you have had abnormal bleeding such as after sexual intercourse or in between your periods.

What is a colposcopy?

Colposcopy is examination of the cervix. It uses a colposcope to take a closer look at the cervix to determine if there are any changes that increase your risk of developing cervical cancer. A colposcope is a magnifying instrument, like binoculars on a stand, which we use to look at the cervix.

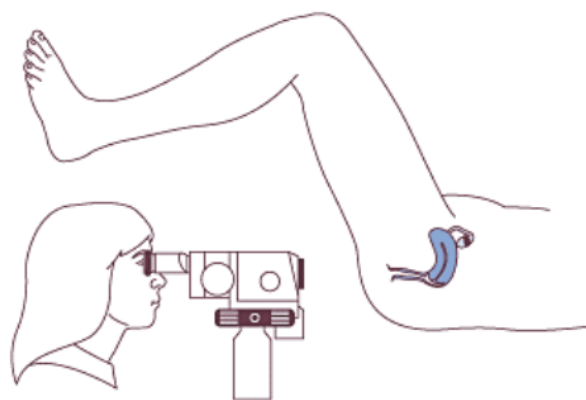
It is important to remember that abnormal cervical screening tests are very common, and that most abnormal CST results do not mean that you have cancer.

What happens during a colposcopy at Bendigo Health?

Your colposcopy will take place in the Women’s Health Clinic and will be performed by a gynaecologist. Sometimes there may be a junior doctor or medical student in the clinic. If this is the case you will be informed and asked your permission for them to be involved in your care. There will also be a nurse present to support you and assist with the colposcopy. The examination will take around 5 to 10 minutes.

Once you are comfortable to undergo the examination the following things will happen:

- you will be asked to undress from the waist down, have a seat on a special examination chair and cover yourself with supplied sheet
- a speculum is inserted into the vagina to allow the cervix to be seen
- the gynaecologist will look through the colposcope at the cervix as pictured - the colposcope does not go in to your vagina, but is positioned between your legs to allow the doctor to see the cervix
- some solutions will be applied to the cervix to show if the HPV virus is causing any problems to the cervix



If there are areas that the doctor is concerned may be pre-cancerous changes, a small biopsy will be taken to help work out if it is a problem that needs treatment, or something that can be monitored. During a biopsy a very small sample

Developed November 2023

of tissue is taken from your cervix. Most people feel a small pinch while this is being performed, sometimes followed by some slight cramping for a few hours. For most people, this is uncomfortable but not very painful.

What happens after a colposcopy?

You will be given privacy to re-dress. Sometimes people may feel slightly light-headed or nauseous as they get up from the examination chair. Let your nurse or doctor know if you are not feeling well.

Most people are able to return to work or their usual activities right after having a colposcopy. Some people have mild pain or cramping, but this usually goes away within one to two hours. You may choose to have some simple pain relief with you in case you need it e.g. paracetamol or ibuprofen.

There may be some light bleeding or brown/black discharge for up to a week following, depending on what was required during the colposcopy.

Your doctor will discuss with you what they saw during the examination and give you a chance to ask any questions. They will advise a plan for follow up which will be discussed with you.

Further information

Scan the following QR codes with your phone camera to follow the links for further information:



My Colposcopy
Experience –
Michelle's Story
(Video)



My Colposcopy
Experience - Rhiannon's
Story (Video)



A guide to
understanding your
Cervical Screening Test
results (health.gov.au)



The Royal
Women's Hospital:
Colposcopy

Questions

Please write any questions or concerns you have here, so you can discuss them with your doctor or nurse:
