

Frequently Asked Questions about Colposcopy

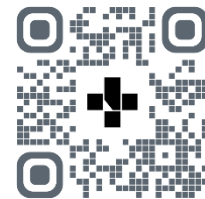
Colposcopy test: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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This FAQ compliments the colposcopy patient education video series, which answers many common questions about your colposcopy procedure.

Colposcopy patient education video series

The AHS colposcopy video series is available at myhealth.alberta.ca/colposcopy or by scanning this QR code.



This video series includes three short videos titled:

- [Video 1: What is a colposcopy and why do I need one?](#)
- [Video 2: What to expect during a colposcopy appointment](#)
- [Video 3: Colposcopy results and treatment options](#)

- To find out more about colposcopy, visit the related resources section of ahs.ca/colposcopy or speak with your healthcare provider.
- To find out more about cervical cancer screening, visit screeningforlife.ca.

Colposcopy questions

What is colposcopy and why have I been referred for one?

- A colposcopy is a test that allows a specialist doctor to look for cell changes on your vulva, vagina, and cervix. The doctor uses a special microscope, called a colposcope, to look for any cells changes that may require treatment, so they do not turn into cancer. Colposcopy is the standard next step for people who have had an abnormal result on their Pap test or positive HPV test (for certain strains).
- Learn more information about colposcopy in the video titled - [Video 1: What is a colposcopy and why do I need one?](#)

Will my colposcopy be painful?

- The entire test takes less than 10 minutes. You may feel some discomfort when the speculum is inserted, or you may feel a pinch and have some cramping if a tissue sample is taken, but the discomfort should go away quickly.

Frequently Asked Questions about Colposcopy

I have been referred for colposcopy, does this mean I have cervical cancer?

- No. A colposcopy is done after an abnormal Pap test or a positive HPV test (for certain strains). A colposcopy may also be done if you have symptoms of cervical cancer (like bleeding between periods, after sexual intercourse or after menopause). The most important thing is to go to your appointment to find out if you require treatment, so cervical cancer doesn't develop.
- [Learn more](#) about cervical cancer.
- [Learn more](#) about other reasons for colposcopy.

What should I expect during my colposcopy?

- Your doctor will use a high-powered microscope called a colposcope to look closely for any abnormal cells on your vulva, vagina, or cervix. Your doctor may do a biopsy. If a biopsy is taken, it will be sent to the lab for testing. The results will indicate if you have any cell changes and whether they require treatment.
- Learn more detailed information about what to expect during your colposcopy in the video titled - [Video 2: What to expect during a colposcopy appointment](#).

I have my menstrual period, can I still have a colposcopy?

- A colposcopy can be done, even if you are menstruating. Please do not cancel your appointment if you get your menstrual period. This can differ by colposcopy clinic, so it is best to confirm with the clinic where your appointment is scheduled.

I have an IUD (Intrauterine Device), can I still have a colposcopy?

- Yes. A colposcopy can be performed with an intrauterine device (IUD) in place. Inform your colposcopy doctor if you have one.

I am pregnant, can I still have a colposcopy?

- It is important to let the clinic know you are pregnant. Call the clinic as soon as possible so your colposcopy doctor can determine and confirm when your colposcopy appointment can be done or if it needs to be rescheduled to a later date.

What should I expect after my colposcopy?

- After the test, you may have a bit of vaginal discharge. It should stop within 1 to 2 days but can last as long as a couple of weeks. It's OK to return to your normal activities, except heavy exercise.
- Seek medical attention right away if you experience heavy vaginal bleeding that soaks through 1 pad per hour, severe belly pain, bad-smelling vaginal discharge, fever, or chills.
- Learn more detailed information about what to expect after your colposcopy in the video titled - [Video 3: Colposcopy result and treatment options](#).

When can I return to sexual activity after having my colposcopy?

- To allow the cervix to heal, avoid sexual activity, douching and vaginal or cervical medications for a short period of time. Confirm this timeframe with your colposcopy doctor.

Frequently Asked Questions about Colposcopy

When will I get my colposcopy results? And what follow-up options may be recommended?

- Results can take some time to come back. This can differ by colposcopy clinic, so it is best to confirm this time period at the end of your appointment.
- Depending on what your colposcopy doctor found, there are several follow-up options that may be recommended once your results are received, including:
 - Return to your regular healthcare provider, or
 - Return to your colposcopy doctor for either:
 - Another colposcopy, or
 - Treatment
- Learn more detailed information about colposcopy results and follow-up options in the video titled - [Video 3: Colposcopy result and treatment options](#).

Should I continue to do Pap tests with my regular healthcare provider if I have been referred for a colposcopy?

- **No.** Once referred to colposcopy, follow-up appointments will be with a colposcopy doctor (called a colposcopist) until you are discharged back to your regular healthcare provider. The colposcopy clinic will let you know when you should return to doing Pap tests with your regular healthcare provider.

I need to reschedule my colposcopy appointment. Who do I call?

- Call the clinic where your appointment is scheduled as soon as possible. They will reschedule a new date and time for you. It's important to follow-up on all abnormal results.

I am moving to a new city or province. What should I do about my next colposcopy?

- Call the clinic as soon as possible so your care and medical records can be transferred to your new colposcopy clinic. It's important to transfer your care to another clinic if you move away.

Related questions

What does HPV have to do with cervical cancer?

- Around 100 types of HPV can affect different parts of the body, but most are harmless and go away on their own. About 15 types of HPV are considered “high-risk” and can cause abnormal cells to develop in the cervix which can lead to cervical cancer if undetected and untreated.
- Learn more about Human Papillomavirus (HPV):
 - [Cervical cancer](#)
 - [Human Papillomavirus \(HPV\)](#)
 - [What is HPV?](#)

What can I do to help protect myself against cervical cancer?

- Learn more about prevention:
 - [Prevent HPV infections](#)
 - [Prevention](#)

Frequently Asked Questions about Colposcopy

- Learn more about the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine:
 - [HPV vaccine](#)
 - [HPV: Should I get the vaccine?](#)

If I have had the HPV vaccine, am I fully protected against cervical cancer?

- No. The HPV vaccine does not protect against all the types of HPV that cause cervical cancer. Even if you have had the HPV vaccine, you should continue with routine screening.

What is a LEEP procedure?

- A loop electrosurgical excision procedure (LEEP) removes tissue from the cervix. You may have this done if you've had a Pap test or colposcopy that shows cells or tissue that are abnormal.
- [Learn more](#) about LEEP for abnormal cervical cells.
- [Learn more](#) about outpatient LEEP.
- [Learn more](#) about operating room LEEP.

What is the difference between low grade (LSIL) and high-grade (HSIL) results?

- Lab specialists label abnormal cells according to how different they are from normal cells.
 - **LSIL (low grade cell changes):** these abnormal changes normally clear by themselves, however, some are more likely to become severe over time. You will be asked to have follow-up monitoring to ensure these cells don't need treatment.
 - **HSIL (high grade cell changes):** these abnormal changes generally require treatment. You will be asked to have treatment to prevent them from turning into cervical cancer.

I have more questions. Where can I find more information?

- To find out more about colposcopy, visit the related resources section of ahs.ca/colposcopy or speak with your healthcare provider.
- To find out more about cervical cancer screening, visit screeningforlife.ca.

For health advice and information, call Health Link 24/7 by dialing 811.
If you need an interpreter, just say the language you need.