

Going for colposcopy

If colposcopy has been planned because of your smear or HPV result, the appearance of your cervix or bleeding after intercourse, this card explains what will happen before, during and after the procedure.

What is colposcopy?

It is an examination of the cervix with a special magnifying instrument (colposcope). It is done on the examination couch with a speculum in place; the device does not enter the body. A vinegar-like liquid is applied to the cervix; changed cells turn white, and if the doctor considers it necessary, a small piece of tissue (biopsy) is taken from that spot. The procedure usually takes 10–15 minutes.

Before you come

- 1 Do not book during your period.**
The best time is the first two weeks after your period ends. If you are bleeding, postpone the appointment.
- 2 Avoid intercourse, tampons and vaginal medication for 48 hours before.**
These can affect the view and the biopsy result.
- 3 Bring your smear and HPV results.**
Colposcopy is done with these results known; older reports and any previous biopsy results are also valuable.
- 4 Tell us if you are or might be pregnant.**
Colposcopy can be done in pregnancy; no biopsy is taken during pregnancy.
- 5 Tell us if you take blood thinners.**
If a biopsy is planned, precautions are taken to control bleeding.
- 6 Bring a panty liner.**
After a biopsy there may be light, dark discharge for a few days.
- 7 Painkillers are rarely needed.**
You may feel a brief cramp during the biopsy; if you wish, take a simple painkiller you are used to one hour before.

When are the results ready?

If a biopsy was taken, the pathology report is usually ready within 1–2 weeks. It may say **CIN 1**, **CIN 2** or **CIN 3**; these are not cancer but grades of cell change. At the results visit, the next steps are decided together.

After the procedure

If no biopsy was taken, you can return to normal life the same day. If a biopsy was taken, the following rules apply.

What is normal

- Light, dark or brown discharge lasting 2–5 days
- Dark, sand-like discharge from the substance applied to stop bleeding
- Mild cramps on the first day

Avoid for one week

- Sexual intercourse
- Tampons and vaginal douching
- Pools, the sea and baths
- Strenuous exercise

Call immediately

- Bleeding heavier than a period that soaks pads
- Fever of 38 °C or higher
- Foul-smelling discharge
- Abdominal pain that persists or gets worse

Possible next steps by result

1 Normal or CIN 1

Usually no treatment is needed; smear + HPV together (co-test) is repeated after 12 months. If it persists for two years, treatment is discussed.

2 CIN 2

Treatment is usually recommended. For women who plan a pregnancy and whose whole cervix is visible, observation with checks every 6 months is an option.

3 CIN 3

Treatment is needed: the changed tissue is removed by LEEP or conization. LEEP is performed at SoftCare Clinic and your follow-up continues at the clinic.

4 After treatment

Follow-up lasts at least 25 years: smear + HPV (co-test) every year for the first 3 years, then every 3 years. Keeping to the schedule is as important as the treatment itself.

In pregnancy

Colposcopy is safe in pregnancy. CIN 1 is observed; for CIN 2–3, colposcopy checks continue during pregnancy; biopsy and treatment are left until after delivery. If you plan a pregnancy, be sure to mention it at the results visit; the type of treatment is chosen accordingly.

Appointment: _____

Last smear / HPV: _____