



DEPARTMENT OF OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY
NAVAL MEDICAL CENTER SAN DIEGO
34730 Bob Wilson Drive, Suite 100
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COLPOSCOPY

WHAT IS A COLPOSCOPY?

A Pap test is performed to find cervical changes that could become cancer. Colposcopy is performed if a Pap test result is abnormal. A colposcopy is an examination of the vulva, vagina and/or cervix with an instrument called a colposcope. The colposcope is like a pair of binoculars that magnifies cells so they are easy to see and biopsy if necessary.

WHEN IS IT PERFORMED?

It is performed after an abnormal Pap smear to determine if the abnormal cells are the result of inflammation or something that may be more serious.

HOW IS A COLPOSCOPY PERFORMED?

A speculum is inserted into the vagina and the colposcope is placed on a stand between you and the physician, but does not enter your body. The physician will look through it and locate the precise area of suspected abnormality. When areas of abnormalities are found, biopsies will be performed. The colposcope is also sometimes used to evaluate the vulva or vagina in similar fashion.

PREPARING FOR YOUR PROCEDURE:

Please remember to schedule your appointment when you will be between menstrual periods, so you will not be bleeding at the time of your procedure.

Do not have unprotected intercourse for two weeks prior to the procedure.

Do not have intercourse, douche, or put any creams or medications in your vagina for 2 days before your procedure.

You may have some cramping following the procedure. Before you come to the appointment, you may want to take 600mg of Ibuprofen (eg. 3 Motrin IB, 3 Advil, 3 Nuprin), so you will be more comfortable following the procedure. Please let the doctor know at the appointment if you took any medications recently.

Please arrive 10-15 minutes early with a full bladder, as you will need to provide a urine sample prior to the colposcopy.

If you are pregnant or think you may be pregnant, please let the clerk know when you check-in for your appointment.

THINGS TO REMEMBER AFTER HAVING A COLPOSCOPY:

If you have a colposcopy without a biopsy, you should feel fine right away. You can do the things you normally do. You may have a little spotting for a couple of days.

If you have a colposcopy with a biopsy, your vagina may feel sore for 1 or 2 days. You may have some vaginal bleeding. You also may have a dark discharge with a slight odor for a few days. This may occur from medication used to help stop bleeding at the biopsy site. You may need to wear a sanitary pad until the discharge stops.

Your doctor may suggest you limit your activity for a brief time. While the cervix heals, you will be told not to put anything into your vagina for a short time, usually 1 week:

Do not have sex.

Use sanitary pads only. Do not use tampons.

You should never douche or wash inside the vagina. The vagina is self cleaning.

Oral pain relievers such as Tylenol or Motrin may be used for cramps.

CALL THE DYSPLASIA CLINIC AT 619-532-7040 OR 619-532-7199 IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR ANY UNUSUAL OR UNEXPECTED SYMPTOMS, SUCH AS:

- Heavy vaginal bleeding (using more than one thick sanitary pad every 2 hours) when you are not expecting your period
- Severe lower abdominal pain
- Fever greater than 100 F (Take your temperature with a thermometer.)
- Foul smelling vaginal discharge

If you have a problem that you feel is an emergency and the clinic is closed, please go to the Naval Medical Center San Diego Emergency Room for evaluation.

You will receive a letter in the mail indicating your follow up plan. It is very important to have follow-up Pap smears at the appropriate interval after having a colposcopy. Call the clinic if you have any questions or concerns regarding your colposcopy.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO HAVE FOLLOW-UP PAP SMEARS AT THE APPROPRIATE INTERVAL AFTER HAVING A COLPOSCOPY ELECTROSURGICAL EXCISION PROCEDURE DONE (USUALLY AT 6 MONTHS OR 12 MONTHS).

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