

## What is a treatment?

The colposcopist may decide to treat the area by removing the abnormal surface cells on the cervix under local anaesthetic using a very fine, heated wire loop. This treatment is called a LLETZ. The tissue sample is sent to the laboratory for assessment. Alternatively, you may be suitable for a treatment called cold coagulation which destroys the abnormal cells. In this case, the colposcopist does not take a tissue sample.

## After the appointment

After the colposcopy examination, you will be able to return to normal activity (this includes going home, back to work or college and driving).

If you have had a biopsy, you may have a light blood-stained discharge for a few days. This is normal and it should clear itself. To allow your cervix to heal, it is best to avoid having sex for a few days.

If you have had a treatment, you should take things easy for the rest of the day. You will be given information about your care after treatment at your appointment.

## What happens next?

If you have had a biopsy, you will get a letter with the result within a few weeks. If your result shows that you do not have any changes in the cells of the cervix, you may not need to visit the colposcopy clinic again. If there are low grade changes, you may need to have a follow-up visit at the colposcopy clinic. If you have changes which are not likely to get better by themselves, you may need to come back for a treatment. Try not to worry.

## Feedback and contact information

CervicalCheck welcomes your feedback.

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# Colposcopy

CS/PUB/CC-3 Rev 6

Plain  
English  
Approved by NALA

The logo for CervicalCheck features a stylized orange and blue flower icon above the text 'CervicalCheck'. Below this, the tagline is written in both Irish and English: 'AN CLÁR NÁISIÚNTA SCAGTHÁSTÁLA CEIRBHEACS' and 'THE NATIONAL CERVICAL SCREENING PROGRAMME'.

CervicalCheck is part of the National Screening Service.



Cervical screening saves lives

Free smear tests for women aged 25 to 60

## What is CervicalCheck?

CervicalCheck – The National Cervical Screening Programme is a Government-funded service that provides free smear tests to women aged 25 to 60.

## Why do I need a colposcopy?

You need a colposcopy because your smear test has shown some possible changes in the cells of your cervix (neck of the womb) or the result was unsatisfactory. The colposcopy examination allows the doctor or nurse to decide if you need treatment. Please try not to worry. Many women are found to be fine or their cell changes return to normal on their own. Some women may need treatment to the cervix. This treatment is carried out in a colposcopy clinic.

## How will I get my colposcopy appointment?

Your doctor will write a letter of referral to a colposcopy clinic. This referral and appointment are part of the CervicalCheck programme and are free of charge. The colposcopy clinic will send you details of your appointment within a few weeks. If you are unable to attend the appointment offered, please contact the colposcopy clinic. If you decide to be referred as a private patient using your private health insurance, you may have to pay a fee.

## What is a colposcopy?

A colposcopy is a detailed examination of the cervix carried out by a doctor or a nurse in a hospital out-patient clinic. The doctor or nurse (colposcopist) will look at the cervix using a type of microscope called a colposcope which does not go inside you. The examination should be painless but some women may find it uncomfortable. During the examination, a liquid or dye will be applied to the cervix to help identify any changes to the cells. The doctor or nurse might take a sample of tissue (biopsy).

## How long does a colposcopy take?

The colposcopy examination lasts about 15 minutes. If you get treatment at the same time, it will take a little longer.

## Do I need anyone with me?

You may wish to have your partner, a friend or relative with you. A nurse will be there to provide support and answer any questions you may have. If you have young children, you should try and arrange for someone to look after them rather than bringing them to the clinic.

## Can I eat and drink before my colposcopy?

You can eat and drink as normal before your colposcopy. Try to eat something before your appointment.

## What if my period is due?

We recommend that you attend your appointment if you have your period or if it is due. Please contact the clinic if you have any questions.

## What if I am pregnant?

If you are pregnant, it is important to attend your colposcopy appointment. A colposcopy can be done safely during your pregnancy. Your doctor or nurse in the colposcopy clinic will discuss your care during pregnancy.

## At your colposcopy appointment

Before the colposcopy examination, the doctor or nurse will:

- ask you about your medical history
- explain the colposcopy examination
- explain any possible treatments for abnormal cell changes
- explain any risks linked to the treatment
- ask for your consent.

You will then be asked to undress from the waist down. The nurse will help you to position yourself on a special type of couch that has supports for your legs or feet. The colposcopist will gently insert a speculum into your vagina, just as when you had your smear test taken. The colposcope magnifies the cervix so that any abnormal areas or cell changes can be seen clearly.

## What is a cervical biopsy?

If the colposcopist sees any abnormal cells, they may take a small sample of tissue from the surface of your cervix. This is called a cervical biopsy. You may feel a slight pinching sensation or you may have a local anaesthetic. This tissue sample is sent to the laboratory for assessment.