

What is a colposcopy?

A colposcopy is a detailed examination of the cervix that is carried out in a hospital out-patient clinic. The doctor or nurse in the clinic will look at your cervix using a microscope. This does not go inside you. During a colposcopy, the doctor or nurse may take a small sample of cells (biopsy) from the surface of the cervix.

You may be offered a treatment at the same time as your colposcopy, or you may have to go back to the colposcopy clinic for treatment once they have your biopsy results. You will be given more information at your appointment. A visit to a CervicalCheck colposcopy clinic is free of charge. For more information about a colposcopy, talk to your doctor or nurse or visit www.cervicalcheck.ie.

You should always follow the advice that CervicalCheck gives you.



About your cervical screening result



Feedback and contact information

CervicalCheck welcomes your feedback.

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Cervical screening saves lives.

How will I get the result of my cervical screening test?

CervicalCheck sends you a letter to let you know when the result of your test is available from the doctor or nurse who took the test.

What do the results mean?

In most cases, cervical screening tests do not show any changes in the cells of the cervix (the neck of the womb) and routine screening is recommended.

In some cases, tests show changes in the cells of the cervix. These changes are common and most are caused by a virus called the human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV is a common virus usually spread by skin-to-skin contact during sexual activity. Anyone who has ever engaged in sexual activity has probably been exposed to HPV. Most HPV infections clear up on their own but the virus can stay without symptoms for many years.

If changes are found in the cells of the cervix, they can be low grade or high grade.

Low grade changes are common and most clear up on their own. If low grade changes are found, a second test for certain types of HPV infection will be done.

If high grade changes are found, these are less likely to clear up on their own. You will need a more detailed examination called a colposcopy to see if treatment is required or not. A colposcopy is free of charge and the doctor or nurse who took your screening test will arrange it for you.

It is important to understand that no screening test is 100% effective. If, at any time, you have concerns or symptoms such as pelvic pain, irregular vaginal bleeding, spotting or discharge, you should contact your doctor without delay.

What does the advice in my letter mean?

1. Your next test is due in three or five years (routine screening)

This means that either no cell changes were found or that minor cell changes were found but your HPV test was negative. This means that your risk of developing cervical cancer is very low at this time. You should have your next test in three or five years, depending on your age. This is known as routine screening. CervicalCheck will write to you to let you know before your next test is due.

2. You should repeat your test in three months

The laboratory was not able to read your test sample. This can happen in a small number of cases.

You must wait three months between tests. This is to allow time for the cells of the cervix to grow back.

3. Your next test is due before three years

You may need to have screening tests more often if:

- you have attended a colposcopy clinic in the past
- your medical history recommends more frequent screening.

4. You have been asked to contact the doctor or nurse for your test result

Your test may have shown minor cell changes and some HPV infection was present. Or your test may have shown high grade changes.

You may need to have a colposcopy for a more detailed examination of your cervix. The colposcopy will show if a treatment or other follow up is needed.

Your doctor can give you more information and request a colposcopy appointment for you. The appointment is for a hospital-based colposcopy clinic and is free.