



## PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

# ABOUT YOUR COLPOSCOPY

## WHAT IS COLPOSCOPY?

Colposcopy is an examination which allows the colposcopist (the doctor or nurse who performs the colposcopy examination) to look at your cervix (neck of the womb) in more detail. It is a diagnostic test, which is more accurate than a cervical screening test. It also allows the colposcopist to see if there are any abnormal areas on your cervix and to grade the abnormality. This will determine whether or not you need treatment.

The instrument used for colposcopy is called a colposcope and it looks like a pair of binoculars on a stand with a light attached. It magnifies the cervix so that the colposcopist can see the cervix in detail. It does not go inside you. For most individuals this is a painless examination, but some may find it slightly uncomfortable. The examination is very similar to having a cervical screening test but takes a little longer.

If necessary, treatment to remove abnormal areas may be performed at your first visit, but this will be discussed with you at your appointment.

## WHY DO I NEED A COLPOSCOPY?

In the majority of cases, you have been asked to come for a further examination because your cervical screening test has shown that you have come into contact with the Human Papillomavirus, which may in turn cause abnormal cells on your cervix. This is not unusual, about one in 12 cervical screenings tests are abnormal. These abnormal cells **are not** cancer, but in some situations, these may become problematic in the future if left. These changes take many years to develop, therefore if you have regular cervical screening tests any abnormality can be detected at an early stage and treated. The cervical screening test and colposcopy examination are performed to help prevent these changes progressing. Most abnormal cells will return to normal by themselves, but if required, treatment can be undertaken; the colposcopy examination will determine this. It is important to remember that it is **extremely rare** indeed for these abnormalities to be cancer. You should have received your results directly from the screening programme.

You may also have been asked to attend because you have seen your GP regarding unusual symptoms such as bleeding after sex or in between your periods; or your GP is concerned about the appearance or your cervix.

## WHAT CAUSES THE ABNORMALITY?

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is responsible for the development of abnormal cells on the cervix. There are many different types of HPV and your cervical screening test checks for 14 high-risk types, which can affect the cervix. These can be transmitted through any intimate sexual contact.

Most people will come into contact with the virus at some point in their life as it is very common. Most HPV infections clear themselves through your body's immunity, but a small proportion persist and can lead to the development of abnormal cells on the cervix.

Smoking or vaping is an important co-factor in the persistence of abnormality on the cervix. Smoking and vaping lowers the immune system making it less likely for HPV to disappear from the body on its own. It is advisable to stop or cut down on the number of cigarettes you smoke or vape.

No formal preparation is required. However, we suggest that you bring a sanitary pad with you as you may bleed very lightly following the procedure. It may be helpful for you to take a mild pain-relieving medication (similar to what you might take for period pain) an hour before the examination to help prevent/reduce any crampy pain that may occur following the procedure.

## WHAT ABOUT SEX?

If there are abnormal cells, sex will not make these worse and they cannot be passed on to another person in the way HPV can.

## YOUR APPOINTMENT?

- Your colposcopy appointment can be performed whilst you are on your period, however some individuals prefer not to be examined during this time. Please let us know if you do not want to be examined whilst on your period to rearrange your appointment. If you have heavy periods, it may be best to defer your appointment as your cervix needs to be visualised clearly. If you are unsure of what to do, please contact the department for advice.
- You should inform the colposcopist if you have any allergies or are taking any medications.
- It would be helpful if you could bring a sanitary pad with you.
- It is very important that you let us know if you cannot attend so that your appointment can be given to someone else.
- If you have any queries regarding the examination, please contact the department and one of the nursing staff will be happy to help you.
- You are welcome to attend your appointment with a partner, relative or friend if you feel this would be supportive for you.

## WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE EXAMINATION?

The examination takes approximately 10-15 minutes, although you should allow longer for the whole visit. You will be seen by either a doctor or specialist nurse trained in colposcopy. Firstly, the colposcopist will talk to you and ask some questions about your medical history.

You will then be asked to undress from the waist downwards in a private environment. You will then lie on a special couch which has padded supports to rest your legs. The colposcopist will gently insert a speculum into your vagina (the same as when you have a cervical screening test); this is to hold the vaginal walls apart so that the cervix can be seen properly.

The colposcopist will then apply different solutions on to your cervix, which will help to visualise any abnormalities. If any abnormal areas are identified a small sample of tissue (a biopsy) may be taken and sent to the laboratory to confirm the level of abnormality. The biopsy is about the size of a pin head. It may be a little uncomfortable but should not be painful. If you want to you will be able to watch the procedure and see your own cervix on a monitor.

After the examination you will be able to dress before speaking to the colposcopist about your examination and they will be able to answer any questions.

## WHAT WILL THE EXAMINATION SHOW?

Colposcopy defines the size and extent of the abnormal areas on the cervix. The technical term used to refer to cell changes, which will be confirmed by the biopsy, is cervical intra-epithelial neoplasia (CIN). This is graded on a scale of 1 to 3 according to the depth of the abnormal changes in the covering layer of the skin of the cervix. On occasions some types of CIN can revert back to normal without treatment. CIN is a precancerous condition; very rarely a biopsy will show cell changes that have already developed into cancer. Following the examination, the colposcopist will discuss the findings with you.

## WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE EXAMINATION?

Any samples that have been taken will be sent to the laboratory. A results letter will be sent to you as well as to your GP usually within 6 weeks. If you require a further appointment this will be organised. After the examination you should feel well enough to continue with your usual routine. If a biopsy has been taken you will need to wear a pad for a day or two and we recommend that you avoid sex, the use of tampons/menstrual cups and baths until any light bleeding has stopped. You may experience some abdominal, crampy pain after the examination and it might help to take a mild pain-relieving medication if you have not already done so beforehand.

## WHAT KIND OF TREATMENT IS AVAILABLE?

Treatment can be offered on the same day if this is appropriate for you. Usually, treatment on the same day is offered when the cervical screening test has reported changes called high grade dyskaryosis. The methods of treatment used in this clinic are large loop excision of the transformation zone (LLETZ), laser treatment, cold coagulation and cryocautery. The clinician will suggest the most suitable treatment (if this is necessary) and this will be discussed with you. Further leaflets are available about treatments offered.

## YOUR FEELINGS?

For many individuals, their first reaction following an abnormal cervical screening is one of fear and many will be concerned that they have cancer. As pointed out, the majority of us who have early changes in the cells of the cervix **do not** have cancer. We often do not like to mention that we have had an abnormal cervical screening, but if you talk to friends or family, it is likely that you will know someone else who has. If you would like to discuss your feelings with someone at the clinic about your cervical screening, colposcopy or any anxiety you may have, please ring and ask to speak to one of the nursing colposcopist who will be happy to answer any questions.

## WHAT ABOUT PREGNANCY?

Colposcopy can be performed safely during pregnancy, and it will not affect your ability to become pregnant in the future. Treatment, however, if required, is usually postponed until after your baby is born.

If you require any further information or clarification, including clarification of terminology, please do not hesitate to talk to one of the doctors or nurses, who will be happy to discuss your concerns with you.

## ADDITIONAL SUPPORT/ REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

Please inform us if you require additional support to attend this appointment or whether there are any reasonable adjustments that we can put in place to make the appointment easier for you.

Further information regarding your Colposcopy appointment can be found on our website, please visit:

<https://mft.nhs.uk/saint-marys/services/gynaecology/colposcopy/> to access this.

إذا لم تكن الانجليزية لغتك الأولى، وكنت تحتاج الى المساعدة، يرجى الاتصال بفريق الحجز للتنظير الداخلي على الرقم

0161 701 4455

يمكن ايجاد معلومات أخرى بخصوص موعد التنظير الداخلي على الموقع الالكتروني <https://mft.nhs.uk/saint-marys/services/gynaecology/colposcopy/> للحصول عليها

Jeśli język Angielski nie jest Twoim językiem ojczystym i potrzebujesz pomocy, skontaktuj się z rejestracją badania kolposkopowego pod numerem telefonu 0161 701 4455.

Więcej informacji na temat wizyty badania kolposkopowego można znaleźć na naszej stronie internetowej pod adresem: <https://mft.nhs.uk/saint-marys/services/gynaecology/colposcopy/>

如果英语不是您的第一语言，并且您需要帮助，请致电0161 701 4455联系阴道镜检查预约团队

有关您的阴道镜检查预约的更多信息，请访问我们的网站: <https://mft.nhs.uk/saint-marys/services/gynaecology/colposcopy/> 了解详情

اگر انگریزی آپ کی مادری زبان نہیں ہے اور آپ کو مدد کی ضرورت ہے، براہ مہربانی کولپوسکوپ کی بکنگ کرنے پر ربطہ کریں 0161 701 4455 والی ٹیم سے

آپ کی کولپوسکوپ کی ملاقات کی مزید معلومات ہماری ویب سائٹ پر دیکھی جا سکتی ہیں، براہ مہربانی اس تک

<https://mft.nhs.uk/saint-marys/services/gynaecology/colposcopy/> کے لئے رسائی

ملاحظہ فرمائیں

## CONTACT DETAILS

### SAINT MARY'S HOSPITAL, OXFORD ROAD:



**To cancel/change appointments or to enquire about your results contact:**

(0161) 701 4455 (option 5) Secretaries (08:30 – 17:00)



**For non-urgent clinical advice within hours, please contact the Nurse Colposcopists located at Saint Mary's Hospital, Oxford Road**

(0161) 276 5485 (08:00 – 17:00)



**Urgent clinical advice or advice out of hours please contact the Emergency Gynaecology Unit (EGU) located at Wythenshawe Hospital**

(0161) 291 2561 (24 hours; 7 days)

### LILAC CENTRE/WOMEN'S INVESTIGATION UNIT (WIU):

#### NORTH MANCHESTER GENERAL HOSPITAL



**Lilac Centre/Women's Investigation Unit (WIU)**

**North Manchester General Hospital**

(0161) 720 2757/2755 – Admin Team (08:00 – 17:00)



**Urgent clinical advice or advice out of hours please contact the Gynaecology Assessment Unit (GAU/F5) - located at North Manchester General Hospital**

(0161) 720 2010 GAU Reception/ (0161) 604 5130 GAU Nurses

Monday & Friday - 07:30 – 20:30

Saturday & Sunday - 08:30 – 16:30

**Outside these hours, please contact A&E or Emergency Gynaecology Unit (EGU) at Wythenshawe Hospital (see above)**

### USEFUL RESOURCES



Jo's Trust <https://www.jostrust.org.uk>



NHS Choices <https://www.nhs.co.uk>