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Obstetrics & Gynecology COLPOSCOPY AND CERVICAL BIOPSY

What is colposcopy?

Colposcopy is a way to look for abnormalities in the cervix and the surrounding tissue. A physician uses an instrument called a colposcope. It doesn't touch the vagina, but lets the doctor see a close up view of the cervix.

If an area of the cervix seems abnormal, a very small tissue sample, a biopsy, is taken and sent to a lab for diagnosis. Usually it is necessary for one or more biopsy samples to be taken. If no abnormal areas are seen, you may not need a biopsy.

How are colposcopy and cervical biopsy done?

This exam is usually done between menstrual periods. The woman lies in the same position used for a Pap test. A speculum is inserted into the vagina. The cervix is washed with a special solution that highlights any abnormal areas. Most of the time during the procedure is spent just looking. It usually takes fewer than ten minutes.

What will the colposcopy and biopsy feel like?

Some women feel discomfort when the speculum is inserted into the vagina. The solution used rarely causes burning or discomfort. The cervical biopsy may feel like a quick pinch. It is normal to feel a brief cramping. There may be slight spotting or bleeding for a few days after a cervical biopsy. A dark, vaginal discharge may also be normal.

Benefits of colposcopy.

Colposcopy and cervical biopsy give more complete information than other tests. A pap test only screens for possible abnormalities of the cervix. There is no other test available which gives the same information.

Risks

It is unusual for women to have any serious problems from colposcopy and biopsy. Rarely, heavy bleeding may occur and this may require going to the emergency room or the operating room for treatment. Infection rarely occurs.

After colposcopy

Wait two weeks to allow the cervix to heal after a biopsy before having sex. You may shower or bathe as usual. Continue all previously prescribed medications. Advil is recommended for cramping.

Warnings

Call the office or go to the nearest emergency room if there is excessive bleeding or severe pain in the lower abdomen is noted.

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