

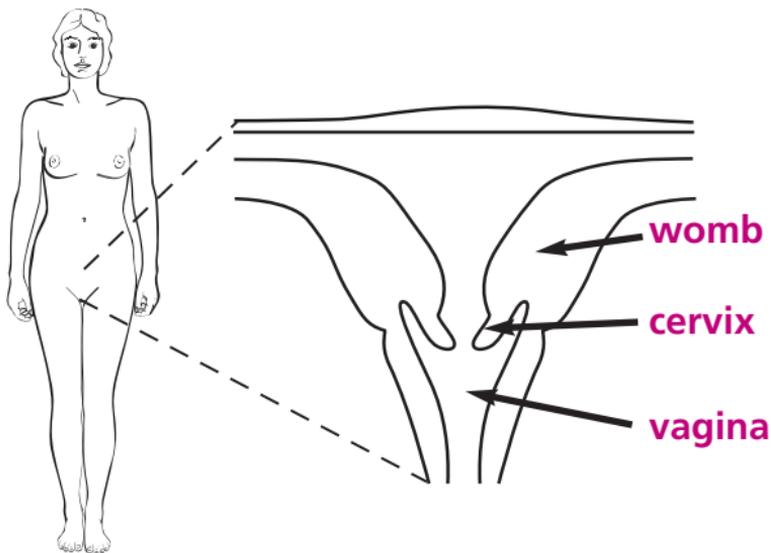
Your visit to the  
Royal Free Hospital  
**COLPOSCOPY  
CLINIC**

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# What is colposcopy?

Colposcopy is a detailed examination of the cervix using a colposcope. The cervix is the lower part of the womb (uterus) that enters the top of the vagina.

When doing a smear test the doctor can see your cervix but cannot get a magnified view. The colposcope gives the doctor a better view. Like a smear test, the doctor will insert a speculum. The colposcope does **NOT** enter your body but sits between your legs.



# Why me?

- Women are referred to a colposcopy clinic if their smears have shown evidence of cells that do not look normal.
- It is a common problem: about one in twelve women have an abnormal smear.
- It is important to remember that it is very rare indeed for these abnormalities to be cancer
- Many of these abnormalities will return to normal on their own, but the rest will be cured after some simple out-patient treatment.

## Before the examination

You may find it helpful to bring a friend with you. The examination is carried out in a room in the out-patient department either by a doctor or a nurse specially trained in colposcopy. You will first meet the assisting nurse who will take you in to see the colposcopist. In the room you will be asked to go behind the curtains and undress from the waist downwards.

Before the examination the nurse will help you position yourself on the couch and ensure that your legs are comfortable in the leg rests. The procedure will last 10-15 minutes so shuffle around to make sure you are comfortable and can stay in that position for the length of the examination.

# The examination

At the start of the examination the doctor will take a smear in the same way as your GP. After this the doctor will look at your cervix using the colposcope. This is not painful. No anaesthetic is needed and you will be conscious throughout the whole examination. In order to see any abnormal area the doctor will apply some liquids. The first is vinegar (this may sting a little). As a final check the doctor may apply a brown liquid (iodine). The doctor may want to take a very small sample of tissue in order to look at an area more carefully. This is a biopsy and may feel slightly painful.



## After the examination

First get dressed. The doctor will usually be able to tell you:

- what the problem, if any, is
- what treatment, if any, is necessary

## What can I do to make the examination easier?

### Remember

- 1 in 12 women have an abnormal smear so it is far from being a rare problem. Colposcopy is a simple, quick and painless procedure.

### When on the couch

- Make sure you are comfortable. Shuffle your bottom to the edge of the couch. Make sure your legs are comfortable on the leg rests before the examination starts.

# How to feel less nervous

- 1** Remember the doctor and nurse want to make the examination as easy as possible for you, so feel free to talk to the doctor or nurse. Ask any questions you may want to, however silly they may seem.
- 2** Take deep breaths. Focus on relaxing. As you breathe out, try to imagine the tension draining out of your body.
- 3** People find different things helpful when dealing with difficult situations. Some people find it helpful to focus on what is happening during the examination. Ask the doctor or nurse to tell you everything as it happens, if this could be helpful for you. Focus on the sensations that you are feeling at each stage of the examination.

Other people find it helpful to distract themselves from what is happening during examination. To do this, choose an enjoyable daydream. Describe everything in great detail including all the sights, sounds and smells around you.

# The unit staff

If you have any questions or worries ask the clinic staff: they are here to help you.



**Heather Evans**  
Consultant  
Lead  
Colposcopist



**Deborah Boyle**  
Consultant  
Colposcopist



**Sheila Radhakrishnan**  
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More information on cervical screening-  
can be found at [www.ecca.info](http://www.ecca.info) and  
[www.bsccp.org.uk](http://www.bsccp.org.uk)