



## **What is a Colposcopy? Your Questions Answered.**

Your doctor would like you to see a Specialist in “Colposcopy Clinic”, located in the Out- Patient Department of Lakeridge Health Oshawa. At your first appointment, the Doctor will examine you by taking a Pap smear, looking at the cervix through a microscope, and determine where the abnormal cells are located. A vinegar solution is sprayed into the vagina to cover the cervix, enabling the Doctor to see these areas more easily. The Doctor may take a biopsy (a small piece of tissue) from the abnormal area and send it for examination. You may experience a momentary tugging or pinching sensation at the time of the biopsy and it is not uncommon to have some spotting for the next couple of days.

The entire examination will take about ten (10) minutes, after which the Doctor will recommend the treatment choice for you. The treatment appointment will be scheduled for another time or may be performed on your first visit. It is important that you do not douche or have intercourse the night prior to your appointment. You must not be menstruating heavily on your appointment day. Write down the date that you started your last period prior to your appointment, as you will be asked for this information. It is not necessary to fast since there is no anaesthetic needed for this examination, so you may eat breakfast and/or lunch on the day of your appointment.

Notify the doctor if you are late for your period or may be pregnant.

### **What is a Pap smear?**

The cells on the surface of the cervix or vagina are painlessly collected and placed in a plastic fluid filled container and sent for examination. This is a screening test only. This is the first step in detecting changes in the cells.

### **What is Dysplasia?**

Dysplasia means abnormal cell growth. These cells are classified as low grade and high grade. Low grade abnormal cells are NOT cancerous, but if left untreated over a period of many months or years, they may turn into cancer. High grade cells include moderate and severe dysplasia which are also not cancerous, but if left untreated over a period of many months or years, they may turn into cancer. The most important concept is that dysplasia is limited to the "skin" of the cervix, and has not invaded into the underlying tissue.

### *What is carcinoma in situ?*

High grade dysplasia also includes “Carcinoma-in-situ” which occurs in surface cancer cells. The cancer has not gone deeper into the cervix. The treatment for this is the same as for dysplasia.

### *What is a condyloma?*

A condyloma is a “wart”. There are several types of condyloma. They may be visible, such as a cauliflower-like growth, which may produce a discharge or itchiness, or invisible such as a flat condyloma, with no symptoms but are detected on a Pap smear.

They are caused by a virus and may be sexually transmitted. Condoms should be used until the treatment has been completed and both partners are found to be free of condyloma, and for six months after. When condyloma are present, there may also be dysplasia.

**If you are pregnant**, your colposcopy appointment will consist of a Pap smear and examination of the cervix with colposcope. The doctor will have you come for frequent examinations before the birth of the baby. A thorough colposcopic examination is carried out two months after the baby is delivered after which another appointment will be set up for treatment, if required. Dysplasia, if present, has no effect on the baby, nor does it have any effect on labour.

### *Available Treatment*

#### *Leep*

Leep is the removal of abnormal cells on the cervix with the use of an electric wand. The procedure takes approximately 5-10 minutes to perform. The treatment is performed with local anesthesia or sedation.

#### *Cryotherapy (Freezing)*

The total time for this treatment is approximately 15 minutes and requires no anesthetic. The cervix is frozen by placing a metal probe, against the cervix. This treatment destroys the abnormal cells, allowing new normal cells to develop while the cervix recovers from the treatment. This procedure may produce mild cramping or a flushing feeling.

#### *Laser*

The procedure takes approximately 5 to 20 minutes, however, the preparation and recovery time may extend your visit up to 4 hours. Laser uses a beam of light to destroy abnormal cells. An appointment will be made for you if it is required. The treatment is usually performed with local anaesthesia but is also done with sedation in the Operating Room.

*After Treatment – Then What?*

Follow-up is very important. There is always a possibility that the dysplasia can persist or recur. Usually a recurrence is not a serious problem if it is detected early, but it can eventually develop into cancer if it is not treated. Therefore, it is essential to keep the follow-up appointments that are planned for you. Your follow-up check will be done at the Colposcopy Clinic for 1-1½ years and then you return to your own doctor for regular pap smears in his/her office.

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