

# Colposcopy Clinic

## Information Leaflet

### Why have I been referred?

Women are referred to the Colposcopy Clinic for investigation of one of the following:

- abnormal cell changes detected on a cervical sampling test
- symptoms such as bleeding on intercourse or a persistent blood-stained discharge
- abnormal appearance of the cervix (the neck of the womb)

About one in 20 cervical sample tests show abnormal cell changes on the cervix. In the majority of cases, these cell changes are the result of infection with the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), and are the early warning signs appearing many years before the development of cervical cancer. Most abnormalities are mild and do not require treatment as they will disappear over a period of one to two years. Some abnormalities tend to deteriorate and need to be treated before cancerous changes develop.

### What is Colposcopy?

Colposcopy is the examination of the cervix using a bright light and magnifying lens. It usually takes around 10 to 15 minutes and may be uncomfortable. The instrument used to perform this examination is called a colposcope. It allows the doctor or specialist to identify the abnormal area on the cervix and to decide if treatment is needed. It is easier to perform the examination when you are not on your period, but can be completed even when you are bleeding lightly. You should attend your clinic appointment even if you are on your period as the doctor will be able to judge whether to proceed with the test or reschedule another appointment for you. Colposcopy can be performed safely during pregnancy as it is similar to a cervical sample test and does not involve the use of harmful chemicals.

### How is Colposcopy performed?

At the clinic you will be seen by a Doctor or Specialist Nurse who will explain your cervical sample test result or the reason for your colposcopy examination.



You will be asked to lie down on a special couch with leg supports. A speculum will then be inserted into the vagina, as for your earlier cervical sample test. This allows easy inspection of the cervix and vagina using the colposcope positioned a few inches away from the vaginal opening. A bright light is shone on the cervix and a weak acidic solution is applied to it. This helps to show the abnormal areas. Should you wish to, you will be able to view a video screen attached to the colposcope. Sometimes an iodine solution may also be used to identify abnormalities on the cervix and vagina. This may temporarily stain the skin for a couple of days after the examination.

On occasion it may be necessary to take a pinhead-size pinch of skin from the abnormal areas to confirm the degree of abnormality before proceeding to treat the cervix. This is called the 'punch biopsy' and may cause a stinging discomfort followed by some light bleeding for a couple of days. It is advisable to avoid sex during this time. The punch biopsy allows the laboratory to confirm the degree of abnormality in the cervix.

The medical term for the precancerous changes is 'Cervical Intraepithelial Neoplasia' (CIN). The severity is graded as CIN1 (mild), CIN2 (moderate) and CIN3 (severe).

Treatment is not required in every case - CIN1 usually resolves spontaneously, but CIN2 and CIN3 will need treatment. Treatment can be undertaken without a prior punch biopsy if the doctor thinks it suitable for you.

The treatment most widely used in the clinic to remove abnormal cells from the cervix is called Loop Excision Diathermy of the Cervix. Treatment is usually performed under local anaesthesia in the clinic.

A separate information leaflet is available describing this treatment in more detail. Should you have any worries following this procedure please do not hesitate to contact the clinic.

If you attend Doncaster Royal Infirmary, please phone Gynaecology Out-patient Department on **01302 642808** or call Ward G5, any day, on **01302 642650**. If you attend Bassetlaw Hospital, please phone Ward B6 at Bassetlaw Hospital on **01909 500990** ext 2254.

### **Patient Experience Team**

The team are available to offer advice or information on healthcare matters. Their office is in the Main Foyer (Gate 4) of Doncaster Royal Infirmary. Contact can be made either in person, by telephone or email. The team can visit inpatients on all Trust sites.

**The contact details are:** Telephone: **01302 553140** or **0800 028 8059**

**Email:** [pals.dbh@dbh.nhs.uk](mailto:pals.dbh@dbh.nhs.uk).

Gynaecology

