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## *Colposcopy*

### WHAT IS A COLPOSCOPE?

The colposcope is an instrument that looks like a pair of binoculars mounted on a tripod, and is used to magnify the tissues of the cervix, vagina, or vulva. This enables the examiner to see minor changes in the color of these tissues and surface blood vessel patterns, which are not visible to the naked eye. It is these subtle differences, which help to distinguish healthy tissue from abnormal tissue. The colposcope is usually used to evaluate women with an abnormal Pap smear. The Pap smear is a screening test and looks at the characteristics of individual cells. The colposcope allows us to identify any microscopically abnormal areas to biopsy for more thorough tissue evaluation by a pathologist.

### WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE COLPOSCOPIC EXAMINATION?

The colposcopy is performed during a regular office visit. It is preferable to schedule this while you are not on your menses. We recommend that you take two ibuprofen or Aleve tablets prior to coming to the office, as the procedure can cause some cramping. Prior to the examination, we will want to verify that you are not pregnant. The colposcopy can be performed during pregnancy, but there certain types of biopsies we would avoid. The doctor will first do a regular pelvic examination. Then a speculum will be placed in the vagina to visualize the cervix. The cervix and vagina will then be washed with a vinegar solution to help remove any mucous or discharge from the cervix and vagina. Another benefit of the vinegar solution is that it brings out the color changes and blood vessel patterns of abnormal tissue. The doctor will then look through the colposcope to carefully examine all the tissues. The colposcope itself remains outside the body and is not inserted into the vagina.

If any abnormal areas are identified during the examination, it may be necessary to take a small biopsy. In cases of colposcopy of the cervix, often a biopsy will be taken on the outside of the cervix, and then a second biopsy taken from higher up inside the endocervical canal. The biopsies only take a short time to obtain and the doctor will let you know before she is about to take a biopsy. The biopsy may cause some cramping similar to menstrual cramps and last only a few minutes.

After the procedure, you may resume all normal activities as you feel up to it. You are able to drive yourself home and/or return to work. You may experience some spotting for 2-3 days from the biopsy sites. The doctor will often apply some silver nitrate to your biopsy sites, which acts as a chemical cautery. This may cause a charcoal, grayish discharge, which is to be expected. We recommend that you avoid intercourse for about a week after the biopsy to allow the biopsy sites to heal.

It usually takes 7 days for the test results from the biopsies to return to our office. We will call you with the results or notify you by another method you request (mail, email, Medbuddy) if those are preferred over a phone call. If additional evaluation or treatment is indicated, appointments will be scheduled at that time.

Please remember to bring your insurance card to your appointment so we may file your insurance for the procedure. There will also be a separate bill from the pathologist if any biopsies are taken.

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