

Colposcopy Clinic



Exceptional healthcare, personally delivered

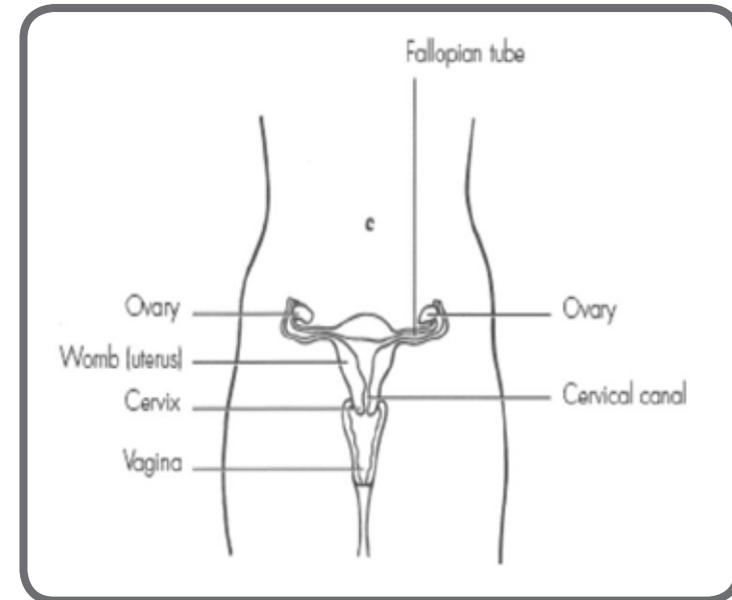
Welcome to North Bristol NHS Trust

North Bristol NHS Trust is the largest hospital trust in the South West of England, providing hospital and community healthcare to the residents of Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset.

We aim to provide **'Exceptional healthcare personally delivered'** by providing services of exemplary quality, ensuring no unnecessary waits or delays, providing care in high quality facilities and having well trained and caring staff.

Why do I have an appointment at the Colposcopy Clinic?

As you may know, the cervical screening test (a smear) is designed to identify early changes in some of the cells at the neck of the womb (this part of your body can also be called the cervix).



The Cervix (Cancerbackup 2007)

If these cells are left unattended, they could cause problems at a later stage in your life. Your recent cervical screening test has shown some of these cell changes, which act as an early warning sign that, over time, cervical cancer may develop. So, you are here because a colposcopy examination is the next step in the cervical screening programme.

What caused the abnormal result?

This is caused by a virus called the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), which you could have picked up years ago. It is very common and at least 8 out of 10 women have the virus at some time. Fortunately most women's bodies reject the virus, but some do not. Smokers are less able to reject the virus. If the virus stays in the cervix for 10 - 12 years, it can irritate the cells and drive them to a change which can then lead onto cervical cancer but only in a very few women.

What about periods?

We would not normally perform a colposcopy while a woman is bleeding heavily because the view of the cervix is not ideal then. However, some colposcopists will undertake the examination if the loss is light.

What is going to happen at your appointment?

You will be asked to fill in a questionnaire about yourself and to sign a consent form about the examination and colposcopy procedures. The colposcopist will then see you and answer any questions. You will have your colposcopy examination, when your colposcopist will see where the problem is and decide what needs to be done. There are 4 possible things that might happen during your colposcopy appointment:

1. Your colposcopist might see no problem. If this happens, you will be advised to have a cervical screening test repeated. This can be anytime between 6 months and 3 years depending on your particular problem.
2. Your colposcopist might see some very minor changes and will take some biopsies. These are tiny pinches of skin, which do not even need local anaesthetic. They have no harmful effects, but you must avoid sexual intercourse, using tampons, soaking for a long time in the bath and

excessive exercise for 2 - 4 days.

After this procedure, you can sometimes have a moderate or heavy vaginal loss for up to 6 days. 1 in 20 women may also experience some pain which lasts on average for 2 days. (The TOMBOLA Group 2009). Once the report comes through, your colposcopist will write to you and your doctor with the results and advice on what to do next.

3. Your colposcopist might see some abnormal tissue and advise you that you should have this treated. The treatment is called **Large Loop Excision of the Transformation Zone (LLETZ). (See below.)** This can be done straightaway or on another day – it is up to you.
4. Your colposcopist might see some abnormal tissue and advise you that this should be treated. You may be advised to have this performed under a general anaesthetic. This does not mean the problem is more serious. The area may be difficult to get at or is deeper into the cervix requiring a bigger biopsy called a cone biopsy. If you do need this treatment we aim to get you in as a day case patient within 4 weeks of your colposcopy appointment.

Will the colposcopy effect my periods?

Some women may notice a change in the timing and length of their periods after their colposcopy. (The TOMBOLA Group 2009).

How will you do the LLETZ treatment?

A fast acting local anaesthetic will be given into your cervix. Once this injection has taken effect, the colposcopist uses an electrical thin wire loop, which scoops out the abnormal tissue and seals the raw area at the same time. To ensure the electric current has a safe return path – and that it does not injure you – a sticky pad is placed on your thigh before treatment. A suction device is also attached, which helps to

circulate cool air. This may sound alarming, but the procedure is very safe and usually takes about 15 minutes.

What if I have a coil (Intra-Uterine Contraceptive Device)?

Often the colposcopist is able to perform a LLETZ by pushing the coil threads out of the way so that the coil does not have to be removed. Occasionally, this may cause the threads to be cut, which may make them difficult to find when the coil needs to be changed. So, sometimes the coil has to be taken out before a LLETZ is performed. It can then be replaced 6 weeks later.

We advise all women with coils who are due for LLETZ to avoid sexual intercourse or use barrier contraception (e.g. condoms) for 7 days prior to the treatment, just in case the coil has to be removed (FFPRHC 2006).

Is the treatment painful?

LLETZ is usually painless or minimally uncomfortable because your cervix has been injected with a local anaesthetic. Some women experience period type pains for a day or so following the procedure. If so please take your usual over the counter painkiller.

Does the treatment have any side effects?

LLETZ treatment is generally very safe, but, as with all surgery, there can be complications. Half of all women who have a LLETZ will experience on average 10 days of both bleeding and discharge, which could be moderate or heavy. Most women have pain for on average 2 days after this procedure. (The TOMBOLA Group 2009). Bleeding is more likely after treatment, if you get an infection in the raw area on your cervix. The raw area takes up to 4 weeks to heal. To keep the risk of infection as low as possible we recommend that you:

- Avoid sexual intercourse and using tampons for 4 weeks.
- Avoid swimming for 4 weeks.
- Go easy on exercise for 2 weeks.
- Take a shower rather than soak in the bath for 2 weeks.

If you do get an infection, there will be a smelly discharge or heavy bleeding (heavier than a normal period). You should contact your doctor and ask for antibiotics.

In very rare cases, when the bleeding is severe, the woman will have to be admitted to hospital. Bleeding can also occur a couple of weeks after treatment. This is due to bacteria that live in the vagina and cause the blood vessels to open up. There is also a small risk that, as the cervix heals, the channel into the womb narrows, which makes it difficult for the blood to escape when you have a period. The medical term for this is stenosis.

Damage to other tissues is very rare.

A standard size LLETZ treatment, which is 7mm to 10 mm deep, may cause shorter pregnancies but does not harm the baby. Deeper biopsies which are sometimes necessary, or repeat treatments, could increase your chance of premature delivery. In normal circumstances, women have about a 1 in 20 risk of premature delivery (i.e. between 24 and 37 weeks of their pregnancy). A deep LLETZ may increase that risk to as much as about 1 in 8. If you want a baby, your colposcopist will only advise treatment if it is necessary. (Arbyn. M et al 2008)

Your colposcopist will be happy to discuss any of these complications with you.

Is there an alternative to LLETZ treatment?

Occasionally at North Bristol Trust we can use either a freezing or high temperature procedure to destroy areas on the cervix, when the LLETZ procedure is not appropriate.

Please note that some travel insurance companies will not provide you with health insurance following the LLETZ procedure. We advise you to rearrange your colposcopy treatment appointment if you are going on holiday or flying within 6 weeks of the treatment date.

Can I bring someone with me?

If you are having treatment, you should always try to bring someone with you so that they can take you straight home after the procedure. If this is not possible, we would keep you in the clinic until you feel well enough to get a taxi or drive yourself home. You must put up your feet and rest for the remainder of the day.

Can I go to work on the following day?

You can return to work on the following day as long as it does not involve lifting heavy objects or undertaking any strenuous activity.

When and how do I get my results?

The removed tissue is sent to the laboratory for examination. We will send a letter to you and your GP with the results within 6 weeks of the appointment. Sometimes, more treatment is needed, and we may ask you to return to the colposcopy clinic to talk through your choices.

What happens next?

For most women (95 out of 100) all that happens is that you have a follow-up cervical screening test in 6 months. You will then be advised how often you need tests in the future. For a few, the problem comes back and you have to have a second treatment. For about 3 in every 10,000 **treated** women, cervical cancer can still develop (Kalliala et al 2005) and that is why it is so important to have follow-up cervical screening

tests. Rarely will women need to have a hysterectomy. This may have to be a consideration if you have other problems such as heavy periods.

References and Sources of further Information

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www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk/cervical/index.html

NHS Constitution. Information on your rights and responsibilities. Available at www.nhs.uk/aboutnhs/constitution

**PATIENT
APPROVED** 

How to contact us:

Mon to Thurs: 9 am - 4.30 pm
Fri: 9 am - 12 noon
(Not on Bank Holidays)

Colposcopy treatment
enquiries



0117 414 6769
Cotswold Centre
Colposcopy Nurses

Or



0117 414 6779
(answer phone)
Nurse Colposcopists

Or



0117 414 6785
Cotswold Inpatient Ward



General enquiries
0117 414 6750
(answer phone)
Colposcopy Co-ordinators



www.nbt.nhs.uk

If you or the individual you are caring for need support reading this leaflet please ask a member of staff for advice.

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take part...
be involved...
in research



While in our care, you may be invited to take part in a research study
To find out more visit:
www.nbt.nhs.uk/research



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