

You have been referred to our Cervical Assessment Clinic (CAC) for a colposcopy which closely examines the neck of your womb (cervix).

A colposcopy is not a general gynaecological examination; it will not tell you anything about your womb, fallopian tubes or ovaries.

Why have I been referred to the hospital?

Your GP or other health care professional has referred you because your cervix looked abnormal or because you have been having some abnormal bleeding or other symptoms that need investigating.

You are likely to be seen quickly after referral. This is normal and is not anything to be worried about. **It does NOT necessarily mean that cancer is suspected.**

What will happen at my appointment?

The reason why you have been referred will be fully explained and you will be able to ask questions.

A speculum (the same instrument that goes inside your vagina when you have a smear test) is used to see your cervix.

A specially trained doctor or nurse (colposcopist) will examine your cervix with a colposcope. This is like a microscope that magnifies and lights your cervix but **does not** go inside you.

The Colposcopy should not be painful although sometimes a little uncomfortable. A nurse will be present to offer support. If you wish you can watch the examination on a screen and the colposcopist will explain everything to you.

After a mild vinegar solution is put onto your cervix abnormal cells look different to normal cells and can usually be seen through the colposcope.

If your cervix looks normal and nothing further is needed you will be discharged.

If you are having symptoms which require further investigation we will refer you on to the appropriate department in general gynaecology.

If there is a benign (non-cancerous) polyp (small overgrowth of tissue) present this may be removed during the appointment or you may be referred on to general gynaecology to have it removed.

If your examination is normal but it is likely that your cervix is causing or contributing to your abnormal bleeding then a treatment called cold coagulation may help. In this case a biopsy will be taken at the first appointment and you will return for the treatment once the biopsy confirms no abnormality.

A biopsy is a small sample of skin from the surface of the cervix which should feel no worse than a sharp pinch.

What happens if my cervix is abnormal?

If an abnormal area is seen then a very small biopsy will be taken. Often women do not feel a biopsy being taken but if you do it should be no worse than a sharp pinch.

The biopsy result will be sent to you in the post within 4-6 weeks and will show whether you have abnormal cells called Cervical Intraepithelial Neoplasia (CIN).

C	Cervical	On the Cervix
I	Intraepithelial	Means that the abnormal cells are limited to the skin and do not go any deeper
N	Neoplasia	Just another word for abnormal cells

CIN is NOT Cancer

CIN occurs in different stages:

- CIN 1: mildly abnormal changes in the skin cells
- CIN 2: moderately abnormal changes in the skin cells
- CIN 3: severely abnormal changes in the skin cells
- CGIN: occasionally the abnormal cells come from the 'inside' or entrance to your cervix and this is known as Cervical **Glandular** Intraepithelial Neoplasia

If your biopsy shows no CIN (negative) then you will likely be discharged from the colposcopy service.

If the biopsy shows CIN 1 we generally just 'watch and wait' because we know that this mild area is very likely to get better of its own accord. You will be invited for a smear, at your GP surgery, in twelve months.

If the biopsy shows CIN 2, 3 or CGIN then generally we offer treatment to remove these abnormal cells.

This is NOT because they are cancer but because we do not know if they will become cancer or not in years to come.

Treatment is carried out at another appointment a few weeks later.

Further information about having a colposcopy can be found at:
www.jostrust.org.uk/information/colposcopy/at-colposcopy

General information

The Colposcopy unit in Cardiff is very busy and appointments are valuable so please try to attend the appointment that has been given if possible. If you are unable to attend then please ring the Colposcopy office on the number on the front of this leaflet as soon as possible so that they can rearrange your appointment and offer the vacant appointment to somebody else.

It is usually not necessary to postpone an appointment due to a period unless you are bleeding heavily (middle few days).

Please keep the appointment if you are pregnant. Having a Colposcopy poses no risk to a pregnancy but let the colposcopist know before the examination as we normally do not take biopsies or smears in pregnancy.

Leaflet written by Sue Ashman / Louise Johnson,
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**Further information
and advice regarding
your colposcopy
appointment in
Cardiff**

**(Cervical Assessment
Clinic)**

Colposcopy Services office
02921 841860
Monday – Friday 08:30 –
16:00