

Colposcopy is a special exam of the cervix which is done when you have an abnormal pap smear result, which indicates possible pre-cancerous cells on the cervix. Colposcopy is not performed for the treatment of the abnormal cells on the cervix. Rather, it is a diagnostic procedure to accurately identify the problem so that further treatment can be planned. Colposcopy can be done here at Student Health Services or you may have it done by your own physician. There is no charge for this specialized procedure when performed at Student Health Services.

Colposcopy is an examination of the cervix using magnification after application of acetic acid (vinegar). This examination allows a better view of any problem area, as the colposcope magnifies from 5 to 20 times and delineates the area producing abnormal cells.

In most cases, the clinician performing the colposcopy isolates the area of concern. During the colposcopic evaluation, a biopsy of cervical tissue might be done. Colposcopy is not painful, although there may be slight discomfort or cramping if biopsies are done. The tissue is sent to an outside pathologist for microscopic evaluation, and will be at the patient's expense. Results often take 2-4 weeks from an outside lab. Treatment is frequently determined after biopsy.

Following your examination, either treatment or observation will be recommended, and you will follow-up with a physician or nurse practitioner for a series of Pap smears to ensure that the problem resolves. Follow up care may either be with Student Health Services or your own physician. These exams are very important since abnormalities can persist even following treatment.

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