How can I help to reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. We ask that you, and anyone visiting you, use the hand sanitiser available at the entrance to every ward before coming into and after leaving the ward. In some situations hands may need to be washed at the sink using soap and water rather than using the hand sanitiser. Staff will let you know if this is the case.

www.buckshealthcare.nhs.uk
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The Colposcopy Examination

Patient Information Leaflet

If you want to read this leaflet in another language please call the Colposcopy nurses on 01494 425575 (Wycombe Hospital) or 01296 316132 (Stoke Mandeville Hospital)
What is Colposcopy?
A Colposcopy is an examination to look more closely at the appearance of the cervix.

Reasons for being invited to attend for Colposcopy
- Abnormal smear—showing dyskaryotic cells.
- Repeated inadequate smears.
- Unusual bleeding from the cervix.
- Concern about the appearance of the cervix.
- Cervix is difficult to see due to its position.

What causes an abnormal smear?
The smear test is a sample of cells from the cervix (neck of the womb). Abnormal smears are reported if pre-cancerous (dyskaryotic) cells are found. Abnormal smears are common: about 1 in 10 smears will show some abnormality. Mild or borderline cell changes can often return to normal without treatment. Very few women with an abnormal smear have cancer—it usually takes about 10 years to develop.

Pre-cancerous changes are usually associated with the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV or wart virus). This virus is very common and most women have been exposed to it at some point in their life, by sexual activity. Smoking increases the chance of persistent cell changes and cervical cancer.

The Colposcopy examination
There will usually be three people in the room with you—two nurses and one doctor. Occasionally there may be a GP nurse or a medical student observing. You can request that they are not present if their presence makes you uncomfortable.

You are positioned on a couch with leg supports. A speculum is inserted into the vagina, in the same way as when you have a smear test done. Your doctor looks through a Colposcope (a binocular microscope), which magnifies the cervix. Various stains may be applied to the cervix using cotton buds, to

Due to the limited car park, it may be time consuming finding an available space. We therefore recommend that you allow yourself adequate time in order to attend your appointment.

If you have any questions that you would like to ask, please do not hesitate to contact one of the Colposcopy nurses on 01494 425575 (Wycombe Hospital).

If you feel you would benefit from visiting the department to have a look around prior to your appointment, please ring and ask to speak to a Colposcopy nurse to arrange a mutually convenient time.

You should receive a letter from your Colposcopist with the results within 4 weeks. A copy of this letter will go to your GP.

We would like to point out that we cannot guarantee which doctor will undertake your Colposcopy and we are unable to organise appointments for specifically named doctors. All our doctors undertaking Colposcopy are trained in this speciality.

Further information
www.colposcopy.com
www.womens-health.co.uk
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Please note
This leaflet explains some of the most common side-effects that some people may experience. However, it is not comprehensive. If you experience other side-effects and want to ask anything else related to your treatment please speak to the Colposcopy nurses on 01494 425575 (Wycombe Hospital). Although there are no known health grounds for avoiding travel following treatment, overseas medical attention for complications arising from the treatment may not be covered by insurance.
In future pregnancies there is a small risk of premature labour, or waters breaking early. We can discuss this further with you at your consultation if you have concerns.

What should I do after treatment?
- Rest for the remainder of the day.
- If you have any discomfort please use ibuprofen or paracetamol. Avoid Aspirin products.
- Normal work and activity may resume the following day, however, if you have had treatment done, to avoid any risk of further bleeding or infection you should avoid heavy exercise for 2-3 weeks.
- Refrain from sexual intercourse for 4 weeks
- Avoid hot baths, Jacuzzis, etc. for 2 weeks.
- Avoid using tampons for 4 weeks.

When should I be concerned enough to phone for advice?
If bleeding becomes more than usually experienced during a period then we advise that you attend A&E. Bleeding less than this will normally settle. Bleeding may be accompanied by period like pain. You may need to have antibiotics prescribed by your GP or re-attend the hospital for further treatment and rest.

Odour is sometimes experienced, but should not be a cause for concern. If the odour becomes offensive, antibiotics may be required. Pain is not a common experience, however in a small number of women pain may indicate an infection that would require treatment by antibiotics.

Helpful information
- If the appointment is inconvenient, please let us know, we can reschedule the date for you and use your appointment for someone else. The number to ring is 01494 425920

identify any abnormalities. For most people it is a painless examination, but for some it is uncomfortable. The Colposcopy examination takes about 15 minutes, but you should allow an hour for the whole visit.

A small number of women do feel faint and weak when their cervix is examined. This is short-lived and improves quickly after the examination is over.

The Colposcopy staff are aware that this can be an embarrassing experience for some women. Please be assured that all the staff will do their best to make you feel as comfortable as possible.

For women with low grade abnormalities a small biopsy is often taken to help advise when the next smear is due and exclude higher grade abnormality—this usually causes discomfort for a split second and often you will be asked to cough as the biopsy is taken as this reduces any discomfort.

We do have the facility to play music in the Colposcopy room. If you think this would be of benefit to you during your appointment, please bring a CD or cassette of your choice with you on the day.

During your appointment you will be given the opportunity to watch the procedure on a TV screen. Of course we understand that this will not be of interest to all women attending their appointment.

What should I do before the examination?
- Eat and drink as you would normally.
- If it makes you more comfortable, have someone come with you to the hospital to take you home and stay with
you for a few hours after the examination. Partners are welcome to come and support you.

- You may find it easier to wear a loose skirt to your appointment, as this prevents you having to remove extra items of clothing. Avoid moisturiser on your legs.
- Avoid sexual intercourse in the 24 hours prior to your appointment.
- If you use a coil for contraception, please refrain from sexual intercourse for ten days prior to your Colposcopy appointment. This may be removed if you need treatment, and you will need to use alternative methods of contraception.
- Avoid using vaginal creams and pessaries prior to your appointment, unless requested by the clinic.
- If you have any information relating to a Colposcopy conducted elsewhere, please bring this information with you.
- Please inform the doctor if you have any allergies.
- At the beginning of your appointment you will be asked for the date of the first day of your last period, so it may be an idea to jot this down and bring it with you.

Please contact the Colposcopy Clinic if:

- The appointment is not convenient.
- You are going away or on holiday within three weeks of your appointment.
- You expect to be having a heavy period at the time of your appointment.
- You are pregnant or there is any possibility of pregnancy.
- You require a wheelchair or have difficulty mobilising.
- You have had a previous problem with a Colposcopy.
- You are being treated for a vaginal infection.
- You have health problems, such as heart problems, take warfarin or need preventative antibiotics.

What should I expect when a biopsy is taken?
This will usually be explained to you at the time, and you will be asked to cough as the biopsy is taken, since this usually minimises any discomfort you may feel for the split second it takes to obtain the small sample. Following the biopsy you may experience some spotting for a few days, and some period like discomfort immediately afterwards.

What if I need treatment?
It is important to realise that not all women referred for Colposcopy will require treatment. For those who do, it is possible to have the treatment in the clinic on the same day, although occasionally we may need to arrange for the treatment in Day Surgery under a general anaesthetic.

Typical treatment is called diathermy loop excision (DLE) which involves a small amount of local anaesthetic being injected into the cervix. In the vast majority of women this is a painless or nearly painless procedure. You will then hear two sounds, the fan of the suction machine and a beeping sound from the diathermy machine. Few people feel anything throughout the treatment and some may experience warmth or pressure. The loop quickly and effectively removes the abnormal tissue. The procedure usually takes about 10-15 minutes and a nurse will be with you throughout this time.

Immediately after the treatment there may be a blood stained discharge, which can continue for several weeks.

The treatment for abnormal cervical cells is very successful and only a small percentage of women, over a lifetime, will require further treatment.

Possible complications following treatment

- A small number of women may require further treatment for heavy bleeding—most often in the first 24-48 hours.
- Infection is rare, but as with any treatment possible—this can usually be treated by your GP.