We continually strive to improve the quality of information given to patients. If you have any comments or suggestions regarding this information booklet, please contact:

Women & Children’s Division  
Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust,  
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Buckinghamshire, HP21 8AL

Approvals:  
Colposcopy Team: V1 Nov 08, V3 May 2011, V4 Aug 2015  
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Patient Experience Group: V1 May 09, V4 May 2016

How can I help reduce Healthcare Associated Infections?

Infection control is important to the wellbeing 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 rub (special gel) available at the main entrance of the hospital and at the entrance to every ward before coming into and after leaving the ward or hospital. In some situations hands may need to be washed at a sink using soap and water rather than using the hand rub. Staff will let you know if this is the case.

www.buckshealthcare.nhs.uk

If you require an interpretation of this leaflet please contact the colposcopy nurses.
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
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 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.

• 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) or 01296 316132 (Stoke Mandeville 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 2-4 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) or 01296 316132 (Stoke Mandeville 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.
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, to avoid any risk of further bleeding or infection you should avoid heavy exercise for 1 week.
• 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. This 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
• It would be appreciated if you could telephone to confirm that you will be attending your appointment. 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
• 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.
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 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.
- Avoid using vaginal creams and pessaries prior to your appointment.
- 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 on holiday or have a special occasion soon after your appointment.
- You are due a 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 if I need treatment?

It is important to realise that not all women referred for colposcopy will require treatment. Most women requiring treatment can have diathermy loop treatment (DLE) in the clinic on the same day. Occasionally we may need to arrange for the treatment in Day Surgery under a general anaesthetic.

If treatment is needed, a small amount of local anaesthetic is 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.

It is important to mention that 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

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