

Colposcopy Q&A

What is a colposcopy?

A colposcopy is a procedure that provides a close view of the tissue of the cervix, vagina, and vulva to rule out any disease. It's something one of our very skilled practitioners here at the D.C. office might order after an abnormal Pap smear. The colposcopy is also used to diagnose:

- Genital warts
- Cervicitis
- Precancerous changes in tissue

Some patients feel anxiety at the prospect of having a colposcopy, which is why Capital Women's Care offers it in the office. That allows patients to have the test done in a relaxing and familiar setting.

What can someone expect during a colposcopy?

Colposcopy is a relatively fast procedure. The patient can go back to her normal activities in less than 30 minutes, typically. The test itself is similar to a Pap smear.

The patient undresses and puts on a gown. A speculum opens the vagina to expose the cervix. One of the GYN specialists at Capital Women's Care positions a magnifying instrument, the colposcope, near the vulva. A bright light shines into the vagina to allow for inspection of the tissue.

Patients might feel a mild burning sensation if it's necessary to clean the tissue to improve visualization and highlight any suspicious cells. If a biopsy is needed, a sharp instrument is used to remove a small piece of tissue.

There may or may not be some pain during the biopsy, depending on the location. If done for vaginal tissue, a local anesthetic will numb the area. If the tissue comes from the cervix, the patient might feel slight pressure but usually no pain.

What happens after the colposcopy?

If there is no biopsy, most women can return to regular activities right away. There may be mild spotting or light bleeding for a day or two.

If a biopsy is taken, patients can expect some pain and minor spotting or a dark discharge. The staff at Capital Women's Care provides instructions on how to manage any discomfort and what to avoid, such as tampons or douching.

They also provide details on when to expect the test results back. Depending on the results of the test, further appointments and procedures might be necessary.