Colposcopy

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Colposcopy is a method used to detect cervical cancer. Frequently, colposcopies are ordered after a woman has abnormal Pap smear result.

A lighted instrument called a colposcope is used to closely examine the cervix. The colposcope magnifies the image so small changes are easier to detect. Vinegar (acetic acid) may be swabbed on the surfaces to be examined. The acid solution makes abnormal tissues appear white, making them easier to identify. A camera may be attached to the instrument to capture photographs of the exam. Colposcopy is not a painful procedure. It is possible that the doctor may want to take biopsies of abnormal areas. The biopsies, however, can be painful and some bleeding may result.1, 2

1 Partridge EE, Abu-Rustum N, Campos S, Fahey PJ, Greer BE, Lele SM, Lieberman RW, Lipscomb GH, Morgan M, Nava ME, Reynolds RK, Singh DK, Smith-McCune K, Teng N, Trimble CL, Valea F, Wilczynski S, National Comprehensive Cancer Network. Cervical cancer screening. J Natl Compr Canc Netw. 2008 Jan;6(1):58-82. [PUBMED]

2 Grubisic G, Klaric P, Jokanovic L, Soljacic Vranes H, Grbavac I, Bolanca I. Diagnostic approach for precancerous and early invasive cancerous lesions of the uterine cervix. Coll Antropol. 2009 Dec;33(4):1431-6. [PUBMED]