

Punch biopsy

Information and advice for patients

Colposcopy

What is a Punch Biopsy?

The test that you have had today is called a punch biopsy. We have taken a tiny piece of tissue, the size of a grain of rice, from your cervix and we will send this to the laboratory. We will examine this closely to see if there are changes in the cells that need treatment.

What are the benefits of having this procedure?

We can often assess the cervix by only using colposcopy. However, sometimes we need to take a piece of tissue to help us make a diagnosis and decide if you need any treatment.

What should I normally expect after the procedure?

- You may feel discomfort like period pain for a few hours after the procedure. You should take your normal painkillers to ease this pain, but do not take more than the recommended dose.
- Usually, you will have a brown or red discharge from your vagina for two to four days after we take the piece of tissue. Do not worry if you do not have any discharge or if the discharge continues slightly longer than four days, as everyone's cervix heal differently.
- Do not use tampons for at least four to five days after the procedure, or until the discharge stops. Instead, use pads or panty liners.
- To reduce bleeding, we usually apply a mustard-like paste to the area we take the tissue from. When you pass this from your vagina, it may look like a yellowy-black plug.
- You can have a bath or shower as normal.

Are there any risks to this procedure?

Complications are very rare, but you may get an infection in the area we took the piece of tissue from. If this happens, you may need to take antibiotics.

Symptoms of an infection

- High temperature or strong-smelling discharge.
- Pain: You should take your normal painkillers to ease this pain, but do not take more than the recommended dose.

If you develop an infection, this may happen immediately after the treatment or any time within the next 14 days. If you have any of the above symptoms, it is very important that you contact your family doctor or the colposcopy clinic for advice, as you may need another examination or antibiotics.

Returning to normal activities

You should be able to return to work and normal activities the same day you have your procedure. We recommend that you do not have sex or go swimming until the discharge stops, to allow the area to heal.

We will be writing to your GP to tell them that you have had this procedure. We will send you a letter with your results which will explain if you need any more treatment or tests. If you do not receive this letter within eight weeks of your last visit to the clinic, please contact us.

Contact Details

If you have any more questions about your treatment, please phone our clinic to speak to one of our nurses.

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For more information about our hospitals and services please see our website www.swbh.nhs.uk, follow us on X @SWBHnhs and like us on Facebook www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs.

Sources used in this leaflet

National Health Service (2017) *Colposcopy*. Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/colposcopy> [Website accessed 14 January 2025].

Public Health England (2016) *NHS Cervical Screening Programme: Colposcopy and Programme Management*. [Online]. London: Public Health England. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/515817/NHSCSP_colposcopy_management.pdf [Website accessed 14 January 2025].

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