

# Women's Health Circle

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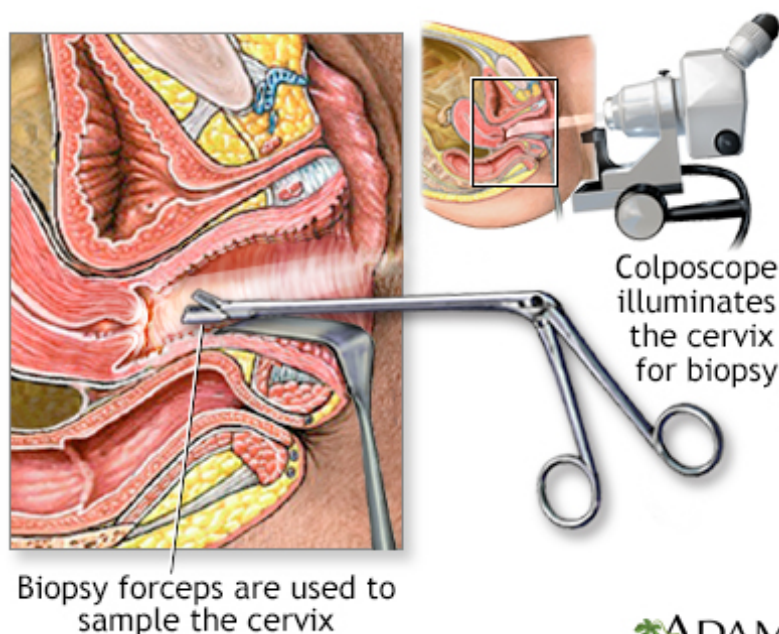
Medical Objects

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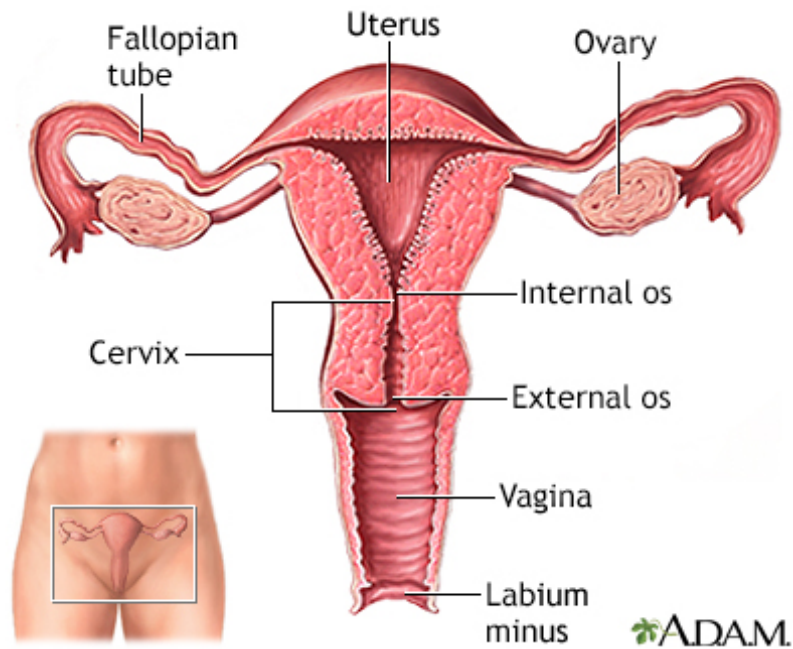


## Colposcopy Information Sheet

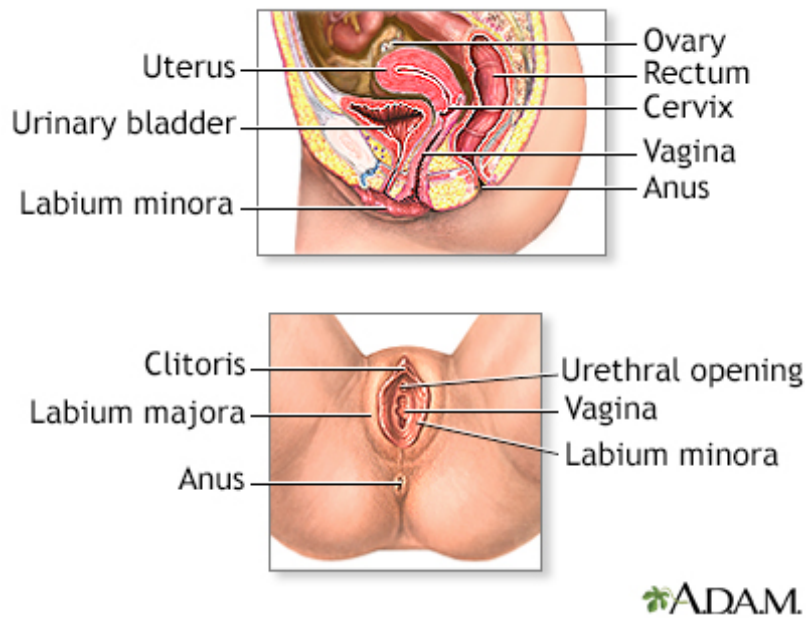
A colposcopy is a special way of looking at the cervix. It uses a light and a low-powered microscope to make the cervix appear much larger. This helps your health care provider find and then biopsy abnormal areas in your cervix.



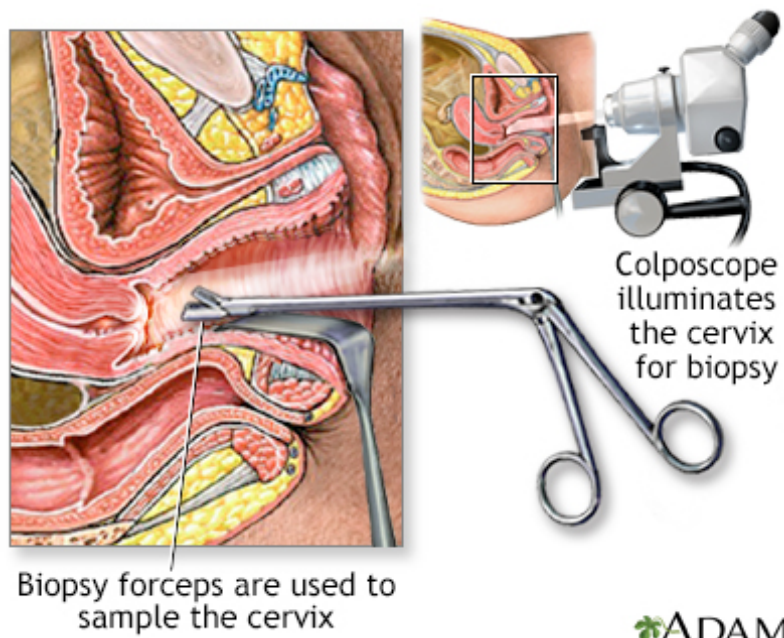
A colposcopy-directed biopsy is a procedure in which the cervix is examined with a colposcope for abnormalities and a tissue sample is taken.



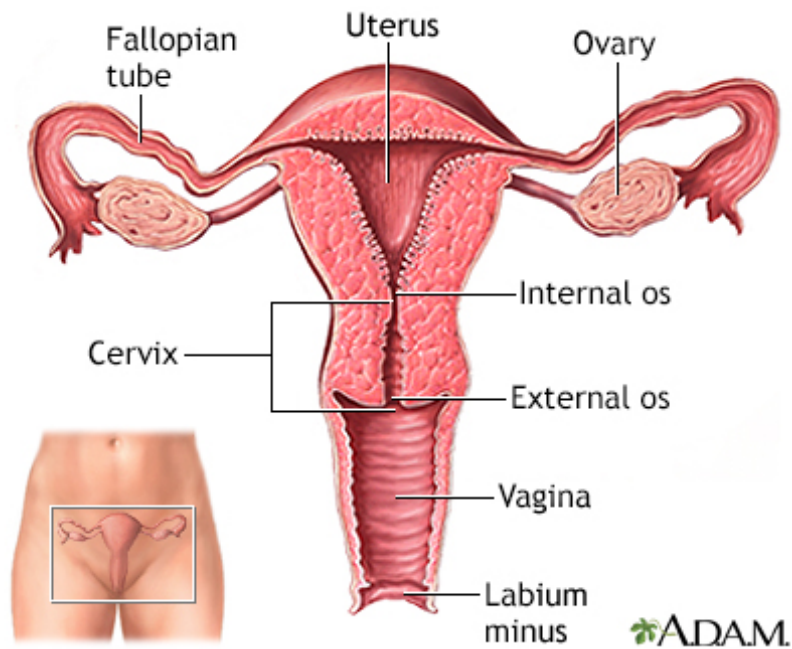
The uterus is a hollow muscular organ located in the female pelvis between the bladder and rectum. The ovaries produce the eggs that travel through the fallopian tubes. Once the egg has left the ovary it can be fertilized and implant itself in the lining of the uterus. The main function of the uterus is to nourish the developing fetus prior to birth.



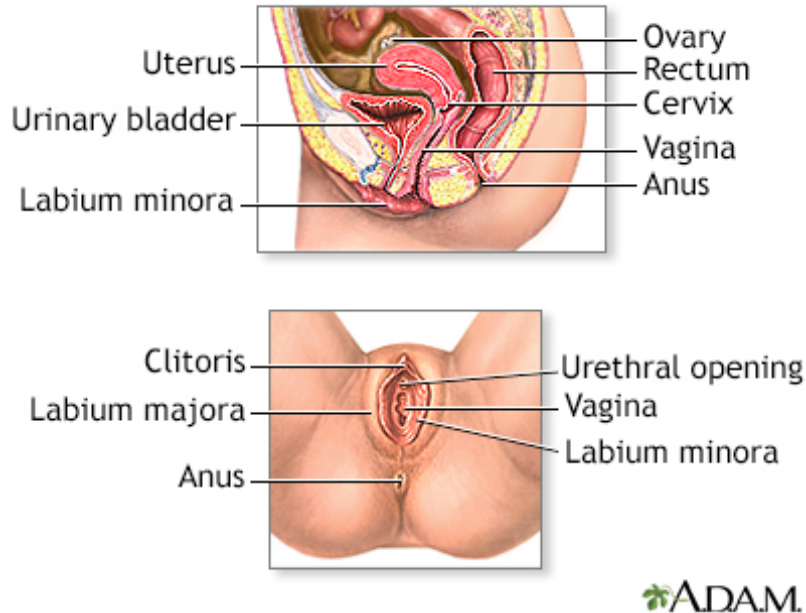
External structures of the female reproductive anatomy include the labium minora and majora, the vagina and the clitoris. Internal structures include the uterus, ovaries, and cervix.



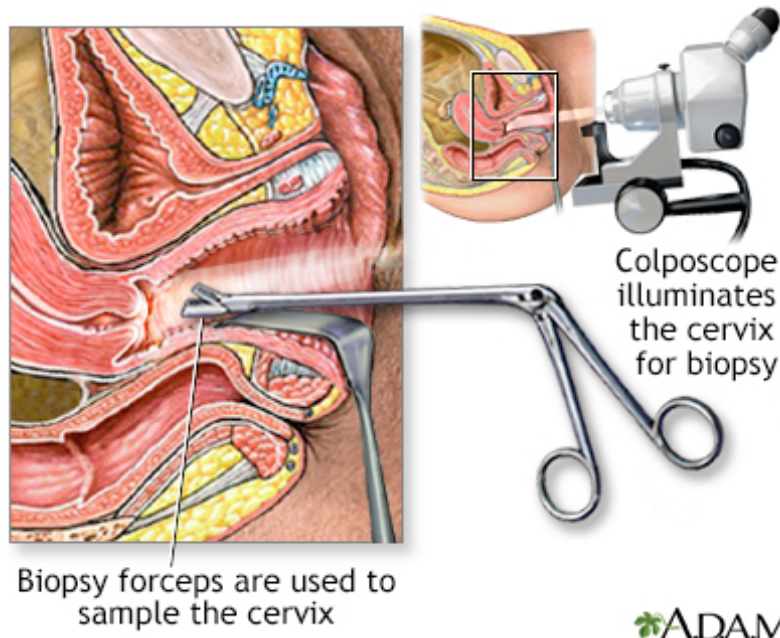
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#### How the Test is Performed

You will lie on a table and place your feet in stirrups, to position your pelvis for exam. The provider will place an instrument (called a speculum) into your [vagina](#) to see the cervix clearly.

The cervix and vagina are gently cleaned with a vinegar or iodine solution. This removes the mucus that covers the surface and highlights abnormal areas.

The provider will place the colposcope at the opening of the vagina and examine the area. Photographs may be taken. The colposcope does not touch you.

If any areas look abnormal, a small sample of the tissue will be removed using small biopsy tools. Several samples may be taken. Sometimes a tissue sample from inside the cervix is removed. This is called endocervical curettage (ECC).



# How to Prepare for the Test

There is no special preparation. You may be more comfortable if you empty your bladder and bowel before the procedure.

Before the exam:

- Do not douche (this is never recommended).
- Do not place any products into the vagina.
- Do not have sex for 24 hours before the exam.
- Tell your provider if you are pregnant or could be pregnant.

This test should not be done during a heavy period, unless it is abnormal. Keep your appointment if you are:

- At the very end or beginning of your regular period
- Having abnormal bleeding

You may be able to take ibuprofen or acetaminophen (Tylenol) before the colposcopy. Ask your provider if this is OK, and when and how much you should take.

## How the Test will Feel

You may have some discomfort when the speculum is placed inside the vagina. It may be more uncomfortable than a regular [Pap test](#).

- Some women feel a slight sting from the cleansing solution.
- You may feel a pinch or cramp each time a tissue sample is taken.
- You may have some cramping or slight bleeding after the biopsy.
- Do not use tampons or put anything in the vagina for several days after a biopsy.

Some women may hold their breath during pelvic procedures because they expect pain. Slow, regular breathing will help you relax and relieve pain. Ask your provider about bringing a support person with you if that will help.

You may have some bleeding after the biopsy, for about 2 days.

- You should not douche, place tampons or creams into the vagina, or have sex for up to a week afterward. Ask your provider how long you should wait.
- You can use sanitary pads.

## Why the Test is Performed

Colposcopy is done to detect cervical cancer and changes that may lead to cervical cancer.

It is most often done when you have had an abnormal Pap smear or HPV test. It may also be recommended if you have bleeding after sexual intercourse.

Colposcopy may also be done when your provider sees abnormal areas on your cervix during a pelvic exam. These may include:

- Any abnormal growth on the cervix, or elsewhere in the vagina
- [Genital warts](#) or HPV
- Irritation or inflammation of the cervix ([cervicitis](#))

The colposcopy may be used to keep track of HPV, and to look for abnormal changes that can come back after treatment.