Your health care provider is advising you to have a colposcopy because you had an abnormal pap smear. This handout tells you what to expect during and after this procedure.

**What is a colposcopy?**

A *colposcopy* is an exam of your cervix that is done with a special set of binoculars called a *colposcope*. The colposcope makes the cervix appear larger. This exam will help your health care provider find the cause of your abnormal pap smears.

Before the exam, diluted vinegar is applied to your cervix. This makes an abnormal area easier to see. Sometimes, your provider will also apply an iodine solution to enhance the findings. During this exam, your provider may take small tissue samples (called *biopsies*) and scrapings of cells from the inside of your cervix (called *endocervical curettage*). You may have cramping during the procedure, but this usually is gone by the time you leave the office.

**What can I expect after the procedure?**

After a colposcopy, most women have some vaginal bleeding and discharge for several days. This is normal. Below is more information about that and other symptoms.

*Vaginal bleeding and spotting*

It is normal to have some vaginal bleeding that ranges from spotting with brown or black discharge to moderate bleeding. You may also pass dark grainy material. This is from the solution used to stop bleeding after a biopsy. This is normal.

If you have heavy bleeding, please call the clinic.

*Infection*

If you have a heavy discharge that smells foul, it may be a sign of infection. Please call for an appointment or talk about it with our nurse. An infection usually takes several days to develop.
Questions?
Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns.

Women’s Health Care Center:
Weekdays from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Tuesdays from 7:30 a.m. to 7 p.m., call 206-598-5500.
After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206-598-6190 and ask for the Gynecology doctor on call to be paged.

Pain
It is normal to have some cramping for a day. For relief, you may take ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil, Nuprin), 200 mg or 400 mg every 6 hours. If you have severe pain, please call us.

Healing
To give your cervix time to heal:
• Do not place anything in your vagina for 2 weeks. This includes no sexual intercourse, tampons, diaphragm, or douching.
• Avoid swimming and soaking in a bathtub or hot tub for 1 week after your procedure.

Follow-up
We will notify you with your biopsy results about 2 to 3 weeks after your colposcopy. Generally we recommend the following:
• If your biopsy shows mild dysplasia (abnormal cells, also known as CIN 1), no treatment is usually required. But, you will need to follow up in 1 year for high risk HPV (human papillomavirus) testing. This is done just like a pap smear. Your provider will usually send you a letter with this result and recommendation.
• If your biopsy results show more than mild dysplasia (CIN 1), we will call you to discuss recommended management.

If you do not hear from us by the 3rd week after your colposcopy, please call the clinic and ask for your colposcopy biopsy results.

Remember, colposcopy is not a treatment. It is the testing of an abnormal pap smear. If your provider recommends any treatment or further tests, it is very important that you have these.