

Further Procedures for Cervical Cell Abnormalities... And invasive cervical cancer

If the Pap test shows an unclear result or minor abnormality, the physician may repeat the test to determine whether further follow-up is needed.¹ An HPV DNA test may also be performed at this time.

Many times, cell changes in the cervix go away without treatment. In some cases, doctors may prescribe estrogen cream for women who are near or past menopause. Because these cell changes are often caused by low hormone levels, applying an estrogen cream to the cervix for a few weeks can usually help to clarify the cause of the cell changes.¹

Your doctor may also perform a colposcopy using an instrument much like a microscope (called a colposcope) to examine the vagina and the cervix. The colposcope does not enter the body. During a colposcopy, the doctor may coat the cervix with a dilute vinegar solution that causes abnormal areas to turn white. If the colposcopy finds abnormal tissue, the doctor may perform **endocervical curettage** or a **biopsy**. Biopsy is the removal of cells or tissues from the abnormal area for examination under a microscope. Endocervical curettage is a type of biopsy that involves scraping cells from inside the endocervical canal (the cavity running the length of the cervix) with a small spoon-shaped tool called a curette.¹



“If the testing shows abnormal cells that have a high chance of becoming cancer, further treatment is needed. Without treatment, these cells may turn into invasive cancer. Treatment options include the following:

- **LEEP** (loop electrosurgical excision procedure) is surgery that uses an electrical current that is passed through a thin wire loop to act as a knife.
- **Cryotherapy** destroys abnormal tissue by freezing it.
- **Laser therapy** is the use of a narrow beam of intense light to destroy or remove abnormal cells.
- **Conization** removes a cone-shaped piece of tissue using a knife, a laser, or the LEEP technique.”¹

If the cells have already developed into invasive cervical cancer, discuss treatment options with your doctor. Treatment options may include:

- surgery (hysterectomy, which may involve removing the uterus, cervix, part of the vagina, and lymph nodes),
- radiation therapy (high-powered energy to kill cancer cells), and/or
- chemotherapy (strong anti-cancer medications to kill cancer cells).²

For more information on cervical cancer treatment, see [Treatments and Drugs](#).

Sources

1. National Cancer Institute (2009). Pap test [online]. Retrieved May 24, 2010. From <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Detection/Pap-test>.
2. Mayo Clinic (2009). Cervical cancer [online]. Retrieved May 24, 2010. From <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/cervical-cancer/DS00167/>.