

Having a Cervical Biopsy

A biopsy is a tiny pinch of skin cells taken from the cervix and sent to the pathology lab to find out if there are any abnormal cells present. If they are present the lab will be able to grade them so a plan for treatment can be made if necessary. Usually more than one biopsy is needed and they will be taken at your appointment, you don't usually have to make a return visit to have them done. Any bleeding will be stopped at the time by applying a special paste or using a silver nitrate stick.

Biopsies have no harmful effects but you are advised:

- To avoid sexual intercourse for 2-4 days
- Avoid Using tampons for 2-4 days
- Avoid Soaking for a long time in the bath for 2-4 days
- Avoid Excessive exercise for 2-4 days
- You may have a moderate blood loss for up to 6 days
- 1 in 20 patients experience pain which may last for 2 days and may require paracetamol to settle

You will be informed of the results by letter within 6 weeks

What might the biopsy show?

- No abnormal cells
- Inflammation or HPV – this is regarded as a normal finding
- CIN stands for Cervical Intra-epithelial Neoplasia and is the medical term used to describe cell changes in the cervix that have been confirmed by biopsy. They are graded on a scale of 1 to 3. **THEY ARE NOT CANCEROUS**
- CIN 1 – this means 1/3 of the cells in the affected area are abnormal. They may be left to return to normal or you may be offered treatment if they are still abnormal after 2 years.
- CIN 2 – this means 2/3 of the cells are abnormal and treatment is usually offered to return these cells to normal

- CIN 3 – this means all the cells in the area are abnormal. Treatment will be needed to return these cells to normal.
- Only very rarely will a biopsy show cell changes that have already developed into cancer

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Liverpool Women's NHS Foundation Trust
Crown Street
Liverpool
L8 7SS

Tel: 0151 708 9988

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