

Abnormal Pap Smear

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What do you do if you go to see your medical doctor for your annual gynecology exam and you get a call saying your pap came back abnormal? What does abnormal mean? Why do you have to go back for something called a colposcopy? What is HPV? They want you to do a LEEP or cyrotherapy, wait, what? Why?

This can all happen very quickly and unless you take the time to educate yourself about what an abnormal pap smear means and learn what your options are, you may end up doing something that doesn't need to be done.

It is recommended that women get their first pap smear test at age 21 or under age 21 if sexually active for more than 3 years. The pap test, also called a pap smear, checks for changes in the cells of your cervix. The cervix is the lower part of the uterus (womb) that opens into the vagina (birth canal). The pap test can tell if you have an infection, abnormal cervical cells, or cervical cancer.

How often you should get a pap smear depends on your age. If you are younger than 30 years old, you should get a Pap test every year. If you are age 30 or older and have had three normal Pap tests for three years in a row, talk to your doctor about spacing out Pap tests to every two or three years. If you are ages 65 to 70 and have had at least three normal pap tests and no abnormal pap tests in the last 10 years, ask your doctor if you can stop having Pap tests.

A pap smear that comes back as abnormal will have cells that are abnormal. An abnormality can be mild or severe. Below are the degrees of abnormal cellular changes that the pap smear can show.

ASC-US- atypical cells of undetermined significance

ASC-H- atypical cells can not rule out high grade lesion

LSIL- low grade squamous intraepithelial lesion

HSIL- high grade squamous intraepithelial lesion

Squamous cancer cells

Typically the cause of these abnormal cellular changes is a virus that is transmitted sexually called the human papilloma virus. **HPV**

During your annual gynecological exam and pap smear it is now possible to test for the HPV virus at the same time. It is possible to have a normal pap smear and still test positive for HPV which is why the new standard of care is to test all women over 30 for HPV during their pap smear test. HPV is the virus that causes abnormal cellular changes of the cervix that can eventually lead to cervical cancer. If the pap smear comes back showing ASC-H, LSIL or HSIL it is assumed you have the HPV high risk strain of the virus.

If your pap comes back abnormal showing ASC-H, LSIL or HSIL then you will need to have a colposcopy done to determine what is really happening with the cells of the cervix. A pap smear is only a screening tool and a colposcopy will allow for a biopsy (sample of tissue) to be taken which gives a better diagnosis of the cells. A biopsy is read by a pathologist and if abnormal will be listed as cervical intraepithelial neoplasia (CIN) and graded CIN I, CIN II, CIN III.

Your doctor will next take the pap smear report in conjunction with the pathology report from the colposcopy and biopsy and determine what if any treatment is needed. Medical doctors (MDs) are limited in the treatment of conditions caused by viruses. Naturopathic doctors (NDs) have a better arsenal of herbal medicines, and nutrients that support the immune system to help fight off a virus.

Treatment

If you have LSIL, HSIL or CIN I, II, or III then your MD will recommend either freezing off the abnormal cervical cells or burning off the abnormal cervical cells. These are called cryotherapy and a LEEP respectively. The MDs goal is to remove the abnormal cells and shed the top layer that holds the virus. But, the virus is in the body and an MD doesn't have any treatments to treat the whole body and support the immune system. Also, there are complications from cryotherapy and a LEEP that will make pregnancy and child birth more difficult.

You have options!!!!!!

If your pap comes back abnormal or you have a colposcopy and biopsies that are abnormal see a naturopathic doctor. An ND can shed the abnormal cervical cells with anti-viral herbal suppositories. These are herbs that are inserted into the vaginal canal and shed the virus and abnormal cells. NDs can also treat the body and boost the immune system and help your body fight off the virus. In cases of severe cervical abnormalities such as CIN III an ND can perform the escharotic treatment which sheds the abnormal cervical cells on a deeper level.

Naturopathic treatment is not an option in cases of atypical glandular cells that show up on a pap or if the colposcopy and biopsy show disease in the endocervical canal. Always consult with your naturopathic physician for proper treatment.