

Outpatient hysteroscopy

This leaflet explains more about having a hysteroscopy as an outpatient, including the benefits, risks and any alternatives and what you can expect when you come to hospital. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is a hysteroscopy?

A hysteroscopy is a kind of test where a very thin telescope (a thin tube with a camera on the end) is used to look at the inside of your womb.

Why should I have a hysteroscopy?

You may need a hysteroscopy if you have:

- heavy or irregular periods
- unexpected bleeding from the vagina in older age
- fibroids or polyps (non cancerous, extra pieces of muscle or skin inside the womb) that need treatment
- problems with fertility or miscarriage (losing an unborn baby)
- removal of a contraceptive coil.

The hysteroscopy may help us to find out if there is anything wrong.

What are the risks?

Problems after hysteroscopy are not common.

There is a small risk of infection so watch for these signs, especially in the first five days after the test:

- pain in the lower part of your tummy
- offensive smelling vaginal discharge
- a high temperature.

If you notice any of these signs, contact us or your GP as you may need a short course of antibiotics.

How can I prepare for a hysteroscopy?

You cannot have this test if you might be pregnant. If you are having periods or it is less than one year since your last period and you are not using any contraception, it is possible you could become pregnant. Please don't have sex for three weeks before your test date.

If you are having your coil removed, please don't have unprotected sex for seven days before your appointment.

If you are using contraception (such as condoms, coils, pills, injections or implants) or have been sterilised, or it is more than one year since your last period, we can do this test at any time.

If your period is due on the date of the test it will not be possible to do it - please call the hysteroscopy secretary to reschedule.

If you are not having regular periods but find you are bleeding on the day of the test, come to your appointment anyway and we can give advice.

You don't need to do anything else special before your test and can eat and drink as normal.

Asking for your consent

It is important that you feel involved in decisions about your care. For some treatments, you will be asked to sign a consent form to say that you agree to have the treatment and understand what it involves. You can withdraw your consent at any time, even if you have said 'yes' previously. If you would like more details about our consent process, please ask for a copy of our policy.

Where do I need to go?

Please go to the colposcopy suite, clinic A, Lanesborough wing, St Georges Hospital.

What happens during a hysteroscopy?

A nurse will check you into the clinic and confirm that all your personal details are correct.

You will meet the doctor or specialist nurse doing your test and they will ask you questions about your health, both now and in the past. They will explain the test in detail and gain your consent. It is important you understand the procedure - please ask about anything you're not clear about.

The test usually takes just a few minutes. You will be asked to lie on a couch with your legs supported on rests so that your knees are raised and slightly apart.

A small thin telescope is then inserted into your vagina. This will not stretch the vagina, so should not be painful or uncomfortable. The telescope has warm, sterile saline (slightly salty water) coming from it to open up the vagina slightly, so you may feel some wetness.

Very occasionally, a speculum will need to be used to open up the vagina, in the same way as in a smear test.

We will then be able to see inside the vagina and the opening to the womb (cervix) and should be able to pass the telescope through the cervix and inside the womb. Most women still only feel wetness at this stage, but you may feel some cramps, similar to period pain. Any cramping should stop in a few minutes.

If you need a biopsy or removal of polyps, this can usually be done at the same time. This should not cause any extra discomfort, but may mean the test takes a few minutes longer. Any samples taken will be sent to the laboratory for examination using a microscope.

Will I feel any pain?

More than half of the women we see do not feel any discomfort during their hysteroscopy.

For most other women, there is a mild cramp like period pain, which goes soon after the test, so you will not normally need any anaesthetic.

Rarely, cramping from the test lasts for up to an hour. If that happens, we can give you painkillers to take.

Some women ask if they should take painkillers before they come. This isn't normally necessary, but won't be harmful as long as you take something you know is safe for you. In most cases this will be Ibuprofen (Nurofen) or paracetamol.

A small number of women (about 2 in a hundred), will have more severe cramp. If this happens we won't carry on with the test, but will stop and suggest you come back to have the test again under general anaesthetic (when you are asleep).

What happens after a hysteroscopy?

The doctor or nurse will talk with you straight away about what was found during your test, and if you need any more treatment.

Most women will be able to leave the clinic straightaway and carry on with normal activities. If you are still having cramping, we will invite you to stay up to 30 minutes longer.

If any biopsies have been taken, we will write to you and your GP with the results within three weeks. If you need any further treatment, we will arrange another appointment and send details at the same time as your results.

What do I need to do after I go home?

You may have spotting of blood for a few days afterwards. While you have any bleeding, we advise you not to have sex, use tampons or go swimming as this may cause an infection. When any bleeding has stopped, you can safely resume sex and swimming.

Useful sources of information

Please look at the health A-Z on the NHS choices website:

www.nhs.uk

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about outpatient hysteroscopy, please contact the outpatient hysteroscopy secretary on 020 8725 1909 (Monday to Friday, 9pm to 5pm).

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

