

HYSTEROSCOPY

What is a hysteroscopy?

Hysteroscopy is an operation to look at the inside of the uterus (womb) using a small telescope (hysteroscope).

Why do you need a hysteroscopy?

Your symptoms suggest you may have a gynaecological problem but the exact cause has not been found so far. Hysteroscopy will help to find out if you have one of the following conditions.

- Fibroids – a fibroid is an overgrowth of the muscle of the womb
- Polyps – a polyp is a small skin tag that looks like a small grape on a stalk
- Endometrial cancer – by performing a biopsy of the lining of the womb, endometrial cancer (a malignant growth in the lining of the womb) can be diagnosed
- Abnormal shaped womb – sometimes associated with infertility, miscarriage and abnormal uterine bleeding

It is very common to find no abnormality. You can then be reassured that there is nothing seriously wrong. Other treatments can then be considered.

What does the procedure involve?

Hysteroscopy is performed under general or local anaesthesia. Sometimes the procedure can be performed in the outpatient clinic without any anaesthetic (see information on next page). Your consultant will advise accordingly.

Hysteroscopy is usually performed within ten minutes. A speculum (instrument) is inserted into the vagina and the cervix (neck of the womb) is cleaned. The surgeon will then pass the hysteroscope (telescope) along the vagina, through the cervix and into the womb. The womb is distended with a water solution, so the surgeon can have a clear view. The surgeon can use instruments to perform a biopsy or remove polyps and fibroids at the same time.

How soon will I recover?

In hospital most women go home on the same day. Your surgeon will let you know the results of your hysteroscopy and what treatment if any is needed. Most women are able to return to normal activities the day after the procedure. Do not return to work or drive until you are confident. For the first 1-2 days you may experience mild period like cramps and mild bleeding. If this happens, take painkillers as needed. If you develop any problems such as a raised temperature, pain, excessive bleeding or a discharge from your vagina you should contact your doctor. You may have developed an infection and your doctor will advise you to take antibiotics. Infection is rare and is easily treated with antibiotics.

Outpatient hysteroscopy

If you have been advised to have an outpatient procedure, the hysteroscopy will be performed in the treatment room in Nuffield Hospital, Cheltenham. The procedure will be explained to you and if you have any questions, please feel free to ask.

You will be shown into a cubicle and asked to undress for the examination. If you are wearing a skirt, this does not need to be removed. You will then be seated onto a special examination couch. The procedure is the same as described above. A camera is attached to the telescope so that a view of the uterus can be seen, and if you wish you can watch on the monitor.

The procedure takes about 5 minutes and once the telescope is removed a biopsy may be taken. The time spent in the clinic will be no longer than 30 minutes. Some women experience period type pain as the telescope enters the womb or when the biopsy is taken. If the cervix (neck of the womb) needs to be dilated, local anaesthetic is inserted beforehand. It may help you if you take some mild painkillers such as paracetamol one hour before your appointment.

After the procedure, the Consultant will explain the findings to you and advise further treatment if needed. The results of the biopsy may take up to 6 weeks and will be sent to you and your GP.

You may notice a watery discharge or some spotting of blood, so it is advisable to wear a pad. If you experience any further period type pain then simple analgesia like paracetamol should be sufficient. It is preferable that you have someone to drive you to and from the hospital.

Contact numbers and details

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