Post-coital bleeding (PCB) / Suspicious looking cervix

This leaflet informs you about what tests and treatments are available if you have post-coital bleeding or your cervix has an appearance that needs further investigation.

What is post-coital bleeding?
Post-coital bleeding (PCB) is bleeding following sexual intercourse that is not related to your period.

Why have you been referred to the PCB Clinic?
Do not worry if your GP has referred you to the PCB clinic. PCB is common and it is normally due to benign causes (not cancer), but it is important for us to rule out worrying causes like cervical cancer.

Not all women with PCB need to be seen in the PCB clinic, it will depend on your symptoms, how long you have had them and your age.

Your GP may also refer you if he or she is concerned that your cervix looks abnormal.

What might be causing the PCB?
Many things can cause PCB including:

- Atrophic vaginitis (dryness of the vagina)
- Cervical polyp (similar to a small skin tag on your cervix)
- Cervicitis (mild infection of your cervix)
- Ectropian (a raw area on the end of your cervix)
- Nabothian cyst (a small cyst or spot on the end of your cervix)
- Infection (e.g. chlamydia)
- Rarely, cancer of the cervix

Sometimes we cannot find a cause for the bleeding.

What will the doctor at the clinic ask me about?
The doctor will ask you about the frequency, timing and amount of bleeding you are having. You will also be asked about your periods, whether you are having any vaginal
discharge or abdominal (tummy) pain, your general health including any results from cervical screening (smear) tests, and the type of contraception you use, if any.

**What will the doctor at the clinic do?**

After asking you questions about your bleeding and your general health, the doctor will examine your abdomen. He or she will then do an internal speculum examination to look at your cervix to try and find the cause of your bleeding. Swabs will be taken to test for chlamydia, gonorrhoea and thrush (if your GP hasn’t done this recently).

In the clinic you may also have a colposcopy examination. This is similar to a speculum, but uses a microscope to look at your cervix in more detail to try and find the cause of your bleeding.

The doctor may need to take a biopsy (taking a small piece of tissue from the end of your cervix).

If you are due to have a cervical smear, this can also be done at the same time.

**What other investigations may you need?**

If you are more than 45 years old, you may also need to have a transvaginal ultrasound scan (TVUS), and an endometrial pipelle (to take a sample from the lining of your womb).

**What will happen next?**

Below are some of the causes of bleeding. If a cause for your bleeding is found, the doctor will tell you, and sometimes it can be easily treated on the same day:

- **Atrophic vaginitis** (dryness of vagina). You may be given oestrogen cream to apply to the affected area.
- **Cervical polyp** (a small skin tag on your cervix). These can usually be removed in the clinic, but occasionally they are too large and you need to have another appointment for a hysteroscopy. This is a procedure where the doctor can look inside your uterus (womb) and remove the polyp. You will be given more information about this if it is necessary.
- **Cervical warts.** These can often be treated (by freezing them) in the hospital clinic, or the genito-urinary medicine (GUM) clinic.
- **Ectropian** (a raw area on the end of your cervix). The doctor may discuss with you changing your contraception.
  You may also be offered treatment by cryotherapy (which freezes the cells on the end of the cervix) or diathermy (which heats the cells). Both procedures destroy the affected cells and can stop your PCB. Neither of these treatments are painful, and they only take a couple of minutes to do in the clinic.
- **Infection.** If any swabs show that you have an infection, you will receive treatment. Occasionally you will need follow-up at the GUM clinic.
If your cervix appears abnormal on colposcopy you may need either a biopsy of the area or a small part of your cervix removed so that it can be looked at under the microscope in a laboratory.

If you have any concerns or any further questions please ask one of the gynaecology nurses or doctors. You can contact the Gynaecology Ward on 01952 565914.

Other sources of information

NHS Choices. The UKs biggest health website, certified as a reliable source of health information: www.nhs.uk

Patient: Evidence based information on a wide range of medical and health topics. www.patient.info

Patient Advise and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS will act on your behalf when handling patient and family concerns, they can also help you get support from other local or national agencies. PALS, is a confidential service.

Princess Royal Hospital, Tel: 01952 282888
Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, Tel: 0800 783 0057 or 01743 261691
Website: www.sath.nhs.uk

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