

GYNAECOLOGY & OBSTETRICS UPDATE

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Cervical screening and Colposcopy in Pregnancy

Many pregnant women don't attend their colposcopy appointment because they think that the examination is contraindicated during pregnancy specially if it was their first visit. I will discuss the indication for cervical screening and colposcopy in pregnancy and their safety

Cervical screening in pregnancy

- * Unless a pregnant woman with negative history has gone beyond three years without having cervical screening then the test should be postponed.
- * If a woman has been called for routine screening and she is pregnant then the test should be deferred.
- * If a previous test was abnormal, and in the interim the woman becomes pregnant, then the test should not be delayed but should be taken in mid-trimester unless there is a clinical contraindication.

Colposcopy in pregnancy

- * A woman who meets the criteria for colposcopy still needs colposcopy if she is pregnant. The primary aim of colposcopy for pregnant women is to exclude invasive disease and to defer biopsy/treatment until the woman has delivered. Women seen in early pregnancy may require a further assessment in the late second trimester. The safety of delaying treatment of pregnant women has been shown in a number of cohort and retrospective uncontrolled studies. The incidence of invasive cervical cancer in pregnancy is low and pregnancy itself does not have an adverse effect on the prognosis.
- * If colposcopy has been performed during pregnancy, postpartum assessment of women with an abnormal smear or biopsy proven CIN is essential. Excision biopsy in pregnancy cannot be considered therapeutic and these women should be seen for colposcopy postpartum.

Safety of Colposcopy in pregnancy

Biopsies and treatment are normally deferred until after delivery in the vast majority of cases. Speculum and colposcopic examination should not affect the course of normal pregnancy. In rare cases where invasive cancer is suspected the colposcopist will discuss with patient the possible risks associated with taking biopsies (mainly bleeding) before deciding on any action

Reference: Guidelines for the NHS Cervical Screening Programme, NHSCSP April 2004

