

Outpatient Hysteroscopy (page 1 of 3)



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The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

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You have been referred by your GP to the outpatient hysteroscopy clinic to investigate the cause of your vaginal bleeding and to decide on treatment. Vaginal bleeding may take many forms such as:

- heavy or irregular periods
- bleeding in between periods
- bleeding after sexual intercourse
- bleeding after the menopause.

What is a hysteroscopy?

A hysteroscopy is an examination of the inside of the uterus (womb) using a telescope. The telescope is the size of a small pen. The telescope is attached to a camera which allows the doctor to see a clear image on a video screen, (you can choose whether or not to look). The procedure is an easy, safe and effective way of checking your womb.

Why do I need a hysteroscopy?

It is the most accurate way of examining the inside of your womb. We use hysteroscopy to:

- diagnose a problem
- treat a problem that we have already diagnosed, usually on a scan.

The most common problems we find during a hysteroscopy are fibroids and small growths called polyps. Reassuringly these are usually not suspicious. We can remove most polyps and some fibroids as an outpatient procedure. Removing a polyp or fibroid can cut the amount of bleeding during periods and works for more than 70% of those who have the procedure.

What are the benefits of having the procedure as an outpatient?

The main benefit is that you do not need a general anaesthetic. This means you:

- can see what we see
- recover much more quickly
- can go home after the procedure
- can start doing your normal activities sooner.

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What will happen during the test?

It is a bit like a smear test - the doctor or nurse may use the same instrument (speculum) in your vagina to access the neck of your womb (cervix). The doctor or nurse passes an instrument like a tiny telescope (as thin as a pencil) into your womb. This is the hysteroscope. It is connected to a camera and a TV screen which shows the inside of the womb. You may choose whether or not you wish to watch the screen. After this the doctor or nurse may remove a tiny piece of tissue from the lining of the womb (a biopsy) which will be sent for examination under a microscope by the pathologist.

The whole procedure takes about 5-10 minutes. You may also feel slightly wet as water is passed through the hysteroscope into the womb to give a better view. Many women feel nothing at all.

How long will the outpatient hysteroscopy take?

The clinic appointment can last up to 30 minutes, but you should expect to be in the clinic for about one hour.

Is outpatient hysteroscopy painful?

This procedure is not generally painful. Some women experience a little discomfort and occasionally 'period-like' pains during the test. The doctor can stop at any time if the test becomes too uncomfortable.

What are the risks of a hysteroscopy?

The following complications can sometimes happen, either during or after a hysteroscopy:

- **bleeding.** Most women have a small amount of bleeding after this procedure. But if it becomes heavy – you are passing large clots of blood or you need to change your sanitary towel more than twice in an hour over a two-hour period – you need to seek medical advice.
- **infection.** If you have an increase in temperature, pain, offensive smelling vaginal discharge or heavy bleeding, you should contact your GP as you may need a short course of antibiotics.
- **uterine perforation.** This is when a hole is made through the wall of your womb during the procedure. The risk of this happening is very small because you are awake during the hysteroscopy.
- **difficulty seeing the cavity** of the uterus.

How should I prepare for my outpatient hysteroscopy appointment?

- **eating and drinking:** you should eat and drink as normal before your appointment.
- **clothing:** we advise you to come to the clinic in clothes that you find easy to change out of for the test.
- **period:** the test is not usually performed when you are having your period but can be done if you have prolonged or continuous bleeding. If the appointment date is on the same day

as your expected period date please call the hospital number on the appointment letter as soon as possible to change your appointment date.

- **sanitary pads:** because some women have a small amount of bleeding after the hysteroscopy we advise you to come with a sanitary pad to use after the test.
- **can I come alone?** Although it is reasonable to come to the clinic alone you may prefer to come with a partner, friend or relative.
- **pregnancy:** if you are, or think you may be pregnant, you should not have the hysteroscopy. For further advice please contact the outpatient hysteroscopy clinic (telephone number on bottom of this leaflet) before your appointment. A pregnancy test will be performed prior to the procedure so you will need to give a urine specimen when you arrive in clinic.

What should I expect following outpatient hysteroscopy appointment?

Your doctor will explain their findings as well as any treatment you have had. They will also discuss with you whether you need any more care. A nurse will check that you are fit to leave the clinic. We have rest facilities available, although you do not usually need to use them.

- **recovery:** you can continue doing most normal activities directly after the hysteroscopy.
- **driving / work:** you may drive and even return to work on the same day as the test.
- **painkillers:** some women experience period-like pains for a short length of time after the procedure. These are eased with normal painkillers (such as ibuprofen or paracetamol - please follow the instructions on the packet).
- **bleeding:** some women experience a small amount of vaginal bleeding or discharge following the procedure. This may last up to 2 weeks. If this becomes heavy or smells offensive please contact your GP for further advice. We advise you to use a sanitary pad rather than a tampon for a week after your test.
- **swimming:** we advise that you do not go swimming while you are still bleeding.
- **sex:** we advise you to avoid sexual intercourse for about a week after the hysteroscopy.