



Gynecological Exam



Gynecological exams are an essential part of women's health care. Knowing what procedures take place during an exam, and why, make the exam more comfortable. Your clinician performs these exams on hundreds of women and does them because he or she cares about the health of women. These exams help detect medical conditions that might be serious if they are not properly treated.

If you have had a negative experience with a gynecological exam, remember that not all clinicians are the same, so not all exams are the same. Talk with your clinician about any concerns or fears you may have so he or she can be of assistance.

Be prepared to discuss with your clinician your medical history, sexual history, and any conditions that run in your family. For example, if your mother and/or grandmother has or has had breast or ovarian cancer, you could be at a higher risk. If you or your partner have had other sexual partners over the last few months, you could be at a higher risk for sexually transmitted infections. It is important to answer questions truthfully so your clinician can provide the services you need.

PREPARATION FOR YOUR EXAM:

1. Complete the questionnaire on our secure patient Web site (isuhealth.shs.ilstu.edu) prior to your appointment
2. Make note of the first day of your last menstrual period.
3. Try to avoid sexual intercourse, douching, and feminine hygiene products 24 hours prior to your exam.
4. Bring any medications, including any birth control pills, with you to your appointment.

PROCEDURE

In the exam room, you will be instructed to remove your clothing. A draping sheet and/or gown will be provided. No one will be in the room when you undress. When the health care provider comes in, he/she will do a general physical exam by checking your throat, neck, lungs, heart, and abdomen. There will also be a breast exam and a pelvic exam.

BREAST EXAM

The breast exam may be important for early detection of breast cancer. While you are sitting and lying down, your breasts will be examined for any abnormal changes in size or shape, and any lumps or thickening. Your underarms will also be examined for lymph node involvement.

PELVIC EXAM

The pelvic exam includes the vaginal exam using a speculum and the digital or bi-manual exam.

VAGINAL EXAM

You will be asked to lie down on the exam table and to put your feet into holders called stirrups. The exam will be much more comfortable if you relax your muscles and breathe slowly. After being draped and positioned you will be inspected for any rash, swelling, inflammation, ulceration, or discharge. A speculum will then be inserted into the vagina for the internal exam. The speculum is a

VAGINAL EXAM— continued

small instrument which enlarges the vaginal opening and spreads the vaginal wall so the examiner can see the inside of the vagina and the cervix. The cervix, which is the lower end of the uterus, and the vagina will be inspected for any abnormalities (i.e. inflammation, bleeding, discharge, masses, and/or ulcerations).



The following are individual tests which may be done with the speculum in place:

PAP SMEAR

The Pap smear is a relatively easy, painless procedure. A small soft brush or a small plastic spatula is used to skim off cells from the surface of the cervix and vagina. These cells are then placed in a liquid fixative which is sent to a pathologist to be analyzed. This test detects early signs of a number of cervical disorders. It is particularly useful in detecting precancerous cells and may also identify some vaginal infections and the human papilloma virus. Pap smear test results are usually available in approximately 1-2 weeks.

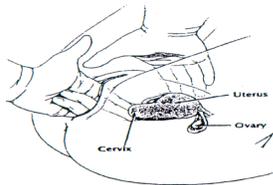
GONORRHEA AND CHLAMYDIA TEST

Since both gonorrhea and chlamydia are sexually transmitted infections with serious consequences often showing few symptoms, you will be tested for them each time a pelvic exam is done. Both tests are painless and involve the examiner using a cotton swab or a small soft brush, taking samples of cells and mucous from the cervix and vagina. Test results are usually available after 48 to 72 hours.

WET SMEAR OR HANGING DROP

If there are symptoms (redness, odor, discharge) of a possible vaginal infection such as trichomoniasis, yeast, or gardnerella, a test called a wet smear will be done. Secretions found on the cervix or vagina will be collected on a swab and put on a slide that will be analyzed during your visit.

DIGITAL OR BI-MANUAL EXAM



After the speculum is taken out, the health care provider will lubricate one or two of the gloved fingers and insert them into the vagina while the other hand is placed on the lower abdomen. With the use of gentle palpation, he/she will evaluate the size, shape, consistency, mobility, and tenderness of the cervix, uterus, fallopian tubes, and ovaries.

RECTAL EXAM

Finally, the health care provider may insert a gloved and lubricated index finger into the anus and rectum to detect any irregularities or abnormal growths.



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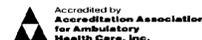
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