

What is the cervix?

The cervix is the neck of the uterus which is the place where a baby grows during pregnancy. The cervix has a small opening that expands during childbirth. It also allows menstrual blood to leave a woman's body.

What conditions can affect your cervix?

There are many different conditions that can affect the neck of the womb (cervix), ranging from mild inflammation to cervical cancer. Some conditions affecting the cervix are more common than others; some are more serious than others. They can all cause different symptoms, such as abnormal bleeding from your vagina, or may not cause any symptoms at all.

Some conditions are normal and do not need any treatment. The type of treatment, if needed, will depend on the underlying condition. Your doctor will be able to discuss with you the most appropriate treatment for you.

How can these conditions be diagnosed?

Most conditions that affect your cervix can be diagnosed by examining you. However, it is sometimes necessary for other tests to be undertaken. For example:

- Internal swabs may be taken. A swab is a small ball of cotton wool on the end of a thin stick. It can be gently rubbed on your cervix to obtain samples.
- Several cervical pathologies can be diagnosed and screened by PAP smear and cytology e.g. liquid based cytology
- A biopsy may be carried out. In this procedure, a small sample of tissue is taken from a lump. The sample can then be examined under a microscope in the laboratory.
- Ultrasound of the cervix: Transvaginal ultrasound. Your doctor may use transvaginal ultrasound to evaluate your cervix and to check if there is any problem with it

What is transvaginal ultrasound?

- During this type of ultrasound, a slender transducer is placed in your vagina to send out sound waves that generate images on a monitor
- The doctor will measure the length of the cervix, look for any masses, polyps or cysts inside the cervical canal or within the cervical substance

What other cervical pathologies can be detected by ultrasound?

Congenital anomalies of the cervix, like cervical septum and double cervix. Inflammation of the cervix (cervicitis) can be also detected. Nabothian cysts, endocervical polyps and fibroids could also be seen during examination of the cervix.

Cervical insufficiency (sometimes called cervical incompetence) occurs when the neck of the womb (the cervix) softens, shortens and opens without any other symptoms of labour. This may be in the second trimester or early in the third, leading to premature delivery of your baby. This can also be seen during ultrasound by measuring the cervical length, funneling or the presence of the baby's membranes within the cervical canal.

Last updated December 2022