Pipelle biopsy

A pipelle biopsy is a procedure that takes a small sample (biopsy) of cells from the lining (endometrium) of your womb (uterus). The sample is then sent to a laboratory to be examined for any abnormal cells. It's usually done by your GP.

If your GP doesn't do this procedure, they will refer you to another GP who does. They'll write to that GP and send the results of any previous tests that have been done. Your GP will discuss this with you.

You should not have this procedure if you:

▪ are pregnant or at risk of pregnancy (not using reliable birth control)
▪ have a bleeding disorder
▪ have pelvic pain or discharge
▪ are unwell with a fever on the planned day of the procedure
▪ have pelvic inflammatory disease.

Tell your GP if you have or develop any of the conditions listed above.

If your doctor says you need a pipelle biopsy, you should ideally have the procedure within a few weeks of it being requested. If for some reason you don't receive an appointment or can't attend the appointment given to you, contact your GP.

Risks of pipelle biopsy

The procedure is usually very safe. You may experience period-like pain, or rarely, prolonged bleeding or infection. Very rarely, the procedure could make a hole in your womb (uterine perforation).

The pipelle biopsy procedure

Before the procedure

You don't need to do anything to prepare for your biopsy, but you might experience period-like pain for a few hours after the procedure. To help prevent this, you can take an anti-inflammatory pain relief tablet such as ibuprofen (Nurofen) or diclofenac (Voltaren) one to two hours before
your appointment. If you can't safely take these medicines, take some paracetamol instead. Talk to your GP or pharmacist about what's safe for you.

Take a sanitary pad with you to use after the procedure.

Arrange to have someone you can call to come and collect you after the procedure, in case you don't feel able to drive home safely afterwards.

**During the procedure**

First, you'll be asked to undress fully or from the waist down and given a hospital gown or robe to put on. Then you'll need to lie down on an examination couch.

The doctor will check the size and position of your womb by gently placing two fingers in your vagina, then placing the other hand on the lower part of your abdomen.

The doctor will insert a speculum into your vagina, similar to when you have a smear test. A speculum is an instrument used to hold open the vagina. They may also use an instrument that helps hold your cervix in the best position to take the sample.

The doctor then inserts the pipelle – a thin, plastic tube similar to a straw – through your cervix into your womb. To take the sample, they'll pull the pipelle, which creates a slight suction. You may feel some cramping during this part of the procedure.

They'll then remove the speculum and send the sample to the laboratory.

**After the procedure**

You won’t need time off work. You can carry out all your normal activities, including exercise if you feel able to.

It's common to have a small amount of bleeding for a few days afterwards. You should use sanitary pads during this time, not tampons.

Don't have sexual intercourse for 48 hours after the procedure.

There is a very small risk of pelvic infection. Contact your GP if you're still getting any pelvic pain or cramping more than 48 hours after the procedure, or if you develop a fever.

**The test results**

Your GP will be sent a copy of your test results about one week after the procedure is performed. Contact your GP if you are not told of the test results within two weeks.

If you have any problems that need further help, contact your GP or the after-hours service if your usual practice is closed.

*Written by HealthInfo clinical advisers. Last reviewed September 2021*