

Endometrial Biopsy

Sometimes it is necessary to obtain a sample of the lining of the womb (endometrium) to help in the diagnosis of your symptoms.

This sample can be obtained by passing a narrow plastic straw-like tube called a pipelle through the neck of the womb. To enable the plastic pipelle to be passed, it is necessary to see the neck of the womb by using the same instrument (speculum) as would be used to perform a cervical screening test (smear).

Passing the pipelle is often painless, though sometimes may cause "period-like" discomfort. Occasionally, there may be some difficulty passing the straw due to the neck of the womb is being tight. This can occur after the menopause. The doctor may need to gently stretch the neck of the womb. To do this a small amount of local anaesthetic may need to be given with a very fine needle so that this isn't too uncomfortable. The local anaesthetic may last for a few hours. Once the pipelle is passed into the womb it takes only a few seconds to obtain the sample.

It is often helpful to take paracetamol 1g (two standard 500mg tablets) and Ibuprofen 600mg (three standard 200mg tablets) one hour before your appointment time if it has been indicated to you that you are likely to have an endometrial biopsy. Alternatively, if it is decided at your appointment that you need the biopsy you may decide to take these afterwards. These are available at chemists and supermarkets. You should not take either if you are known to be allergic to them.

You may experience some spotting of blood for a few days afterwards requiring the use of a sanitary towel. There is a small chance of developing an infection in your womb after this procedure. If you feel unwell, have a temperature, have prolonged pain or offensive vaginal discharge, you should see your GP as you may require antibiotics. It is probably best not to use tampons or have sex until the bleeding has settled, as this may increase the chance of an infection after the procedure.

Once the sample has been obtained, it will be sent to the laboratory for testing. You will either get a letter informing you of the results, or a follow-up appointment to discuss the results.

The Trust cannot accept any responsibility for the accuracy of the information given if the leaflet is not used by RD&E staff undertaking procedures at the RD&E hospitals.

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