

Gynaecological problems / Mātai āhuatanga wahine

Concerns about your reproductive system? (female body parts) /whare tangata?

When you are told that there are concerns about your female body parts (your womb; cervix, ovaries; vagina; or vulva) especially if cancer is suspected, it can be a very anxious time for you and your family/whānau. You may be offered a number of tests and appointments at the hospital to help find out what is wrong. These tests are important as they will help your doctor and you understand what the problem is and what the best treatment will be.

Go to your family doctor (GP) with a symptom or question about your health.



He/she might request some tests to be done, e.g. blood tests, cervical smear or an ultrasound scan.



He/she may then refer you to a hospital specialist.

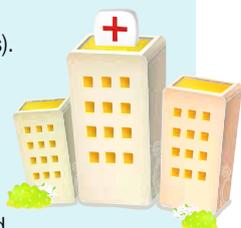
After a few weeks you will get an appointment to see the specialist (gynaecologist) at your local hospital. You will be asked about what has been happening to you and the specialist will examine you. There might be some more tests that are required, e.g.

- Colposcopy, hysteroscopy
- Trans Vaginal Ultrasound Scan,
- CT scan,
- MRI scan,
- PET scan
- Chest x-ray
- taking a biopsy
- blood tests
- a surgical procedure under anaesthetic.

If you need to have surgery, your gynaecologist may refer you to Auckland Hospital, where specialist surgeons are available to treat you. It is important you know how to get in touch with your nurse specialist or nurse coordinator who can help with this. (See below for contact details).

Sometimes the surgery can be done at your local hospital and your specialist will discuss this with you.

After your surgery, you may need additional treatment and your health team will discuss this with you.



When all the information is ready, your case may be discussed at a "multi-disciplinary team meeting" (MDM).

See below for more information.



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No action will be taken without your agreement and full understanding each step of the way. More information about these tests will be given to you before they happen.

Radiology (x-ray) scans:

- Ultrasound scan, done from inside your vagina (trans-vaginal), uses ultrasound waves to show details of the ovaries and womb. This is often one of the first investigations done.
- CT (Computed Tomography) scan gives cross-section detail of the inside of your body, and may be used to examine the chest and abdomen as well. This helps detect whether your problem is confined to your women's parts or has spread elsewhere. This investigation may be done before or after you know exactly what your problem is.
- MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) scan using magnetic and radio waves may also be needed to provide better pictures of the body, especially of the cervix or uterus. It is much the same as a CT scan and you may be given a special injection or drink to help get the best images.
- PET (Positron Emission Tomography) scan shows the chemical function of the organ or tissue, and may be used to show small areas of tumour that are less obvious and to help choose the best treatment for you. This PET is like a CT scan and you may have both done at the same appointment, but it takes a bit longer and is done in Hamilton.

Looking and taking tissue samples:

- During an examination, a plastic speculum is often used to hold the vagina open, so the doctor can see the tissues and check for changes in the vagina, cervix or uterus. A tissue sample (biopsy) may be taken at the time with a small instrument, or a tiny suction straw (pipelle) for the lining of the uterus.
- Colposcopy is when an instrument like a small telescope is used to look at the vulva, vagina and cervix. This is normally done in an outpatient clinic. Small pieces of tissue (a biopsy) may be taken to send to the laboratory to help with finding out what your problem is. Local anaesthetic may be used to numb the area before the tissue biopsy is taken.
- Hysteroscopy is when a small flexible telescope is used to see inside the uterus, and is usually done under general anaesthetic in an operating theatre. It may be combined with scraping and taking tissue from the uterus, to be examined in the laboratory.
- Examination under Anaesthetic (EUA) may be done in a theatre also, to check other aspects of your women's parts to find out what is wrong or plan treatment.

Gynae-oncology Multi-Disciplinary Meeting (MDM)

- When a diagnosis is made or a treatment plan needed, and with your permission, your specialist may send your information to an MDM meeting. A group of specialists including surgeons, radiologists, pathologists and oncologists (cancer specialists) meet weekly to discuss and give advice on women's parts problems and best treatment plan. This report will be sent back to your specialist and GP for discussion with you and your whānau.

If you have any questions you can contact the clinical nurse specialist who is involved in your care:

Name:

Contact: