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Endocervical culture

Endocervical culture is a laboratory test that helps identify infection in the female genital tract.

How the Test is Performed

During a vaginal examination, the health care provider uses a swab to take samples of mucus and cells from the endocervix. This is the area around the opening of the uterus. The samples are sent to a lab. There, they are placed in a special dish (culture). They are then watched to see if bacteria, virus, or fungus grow. Further tests may be done to identify the specific organism and determine the best treatment.

How to Prepare for the Test

In the 2 days before the procedure:

- Do not use creams or other medicines in the vagina.
- Do not douche. (You should never douche. Douching can cause infection of the vagina or uterus.)
- Avoid intercourse.
- Empty your bladder and bowel.
- At your provider's office, follow instructions for preparing for the vaginal exam.

How the Test will Feel

You will feel some pressure from the speculum. This is an instrument inserted into the vagina to hold the area open so that the provider can view the cervix and collect the samples. There may be a slight cramping when the swab touches the cervix.

Why the Test is Performed

The test may be done to determine the cause of vaginitis, pelvic pain, an unusual vaginal discharge, or other signs of infection.

Normal Results

Organisms that are usually present in the vagina are there in the expected amounts.

What Abnormal Results Mean

Abnormal results indicate the presence of an infection in the genital tract or urinary tract in women, such as:

- Genital herpes
- Chronic swelling and irritation of the urethra (urethritis)
- Sexually transmitted infections, such as gonorrhea or chlamydia
- Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)

Risks

There may be slight bleeding or spotting after the test. This is normal.

Alternative Names

Vaginal culture; Female genital tract culture; Culture - cervix

References

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