

Gynaecological Rapid Access Clinic (RAC)

Information for your visit from Women's Health

What is the Gynaecological Rapid Access Clinic (RAC)? and, why have I been referred?

The purpose of the Gynaecological RAC is to make sure that patients whose symptoms might be caused by a serious problem, which can occasionally be cancer, are seen as quickly as possible. This avoids the waiting associated with ordinary clinic referrals, so that those who do not need further treatment (about nine in every 10 cases referred) can be quickly reassured, and those who do need further treatment can have it organised without further delay.

Referrals are usually made by your GP, but can sometimes come from the scan department if during a routine scan they see, for example ovarian cysts or thickened womb linings.

What will happen in the clinic?

When you arrive at the clinic you will be met by the receptionist who will ask you to take a seat in the waiting area. If an abdominal and/or pelvic scan is needed before your appointment, you will be directed to the scan department for this.

At your consultation your doctor will ask some questions about your symptoms and past medical history. They will ask for your consent to proceed with a pelvic examination (sometimes called an internal) to check your vulva, vagina, cervix, uterus, and ovaries. Sometimes the rectum (back passage) will also be examined. Remember that you can withdraw your consent for treatment at any time.

For most women this is a painless examination, although it may be a little uncomfortable. Please tell the doctor or nurse if you have a latex allergy.

Your doctor may ask you to have some tests while you are at the hospital or arrange these for another day.

There will be a female chaperone present, she is there to support you and assist the doctor.



How long will I be in the clinic?

You may be in the clinic for one to two hours, as tests and examinations may take time to complete.

You are welcome to bring a friend or relative with you to your appointment.

What tests/procedures might I have at the clinic?

The tests you need will depend on your symptoms. We have listed the types of tests carried out in this clinic on the next few pages. You may need more than one test and some may be arranged for a later date.

- **Pelvic examination**

This is an examination of your abdomen and pelvis. The doctor will use their hands to feel your abdomen, to check that there is nothing unusual. Your GP may have done a similar examination already. The doctor may also need to place their fingers inside your vagina or back passage whilst carrying out this examination.

- **Speculum examination**

This is an examination to look inside your vagina. An instrument called a speculum is used to open your vagina; this is the same instrument that is used when you have a smear test.

It may be an uncomfortable feeling for some women, but it is not usually painful.

- **Blood tests**

You may have a blood test to make sure you are not anaemic and to check your hormone levels. Special blood tests may also be carried out to help diagnose your condition.

- **Ultrasound**

You will need a relatively full bladder for an ultrasound scan. We suggest you do not pass urine for at least an hour before the time of your scan, and that you try to drink one to two pints of liquid an hour before.

An ultrasound is a scan that creates pictures of the organs inside your pelvis and abdomen using sound waves. Your doctor may arrange for you to have either a trans-vaginal or abdominal ultrasound scan. Sometimes your doctor may ask you to have both types of scan.

An abdominal ultrasound is similar to that done in pregnancy, with the scanner device being rubbed over your abdomen. Trans-vaginal ultrasound involves gently inserting a small probe covered with a protective sheath a short way in to your vagina. Although this type of ultrasound may sound uncomfortable, many women find it more comfortable than having an abdominal ultrasound as it is not necessary to have a full bladder.

- **Endometrial biopsy**

If you have been having abnormal bleeding or a scan has shown an abnormality within the lining of your womb (endometrium) a biopsy (a sample of tissue) will be taken from this area for testing in the laboratory.

A thin flexible instrument (like a straw) called a pipelle is inserted through the cervix (neck of the womb) and sucks away a small sample of your womb lining. This procedure can sometimes cause period-like pains but these should not last for long. You may still need to take simple pain relief (such as paracetamol) for a few hours after your biopsy.

- **Hysteroscopy**

A very thin telescope is used to look inside your womb (uterus). A sample of cells (pipelle biopsy) may be taken from the lining of your womb and sent to the laboratory to be checked under the microscope.

For more information ask a member of staff for a copy of the Trust's **Hysteroscopy** leaflet or download a copy from www.ekhufft.nhs.uk/gynaecology-patient-leaflets/

- **Colposcopy**

A colposcopy is similar to a smear test and is usually painless. A microscope with a light (colposcope) is used to look at your cervix (neck of the womb). If there are any abnormal areas a cervical biopsy will be taken (see below) and sent to the laboratory to be checked.

- **Cervical biopsy**

This is performed as either a small pinch of tissue (punch biopsy) or a larger biopsy called a loop biopsy. If a loop biopsy (LLETZ) is needed, then you will be given a small injection of local anaesthetic in your cervix, so that you do not feel any discomfort during your procedure. A small heated wire loop is then passed through your cervix to get the sample.

For more information ask a member of staff for a copy of the Trust's **LLETZ** leaflet or download a copy from www.ekhufft.nhs.uk/gynaecology-patient-leaflets/

- **Vulvoscopy and vulval biopsy**

These procedures will only be carried out if you have been having problems in this area. The skin on your vulva (the folds of skin around the entrance to your vagina) will be thoroughly examined by the doctor using a microscope. If any abnormal areas are found, the doctor may take a biopsy under local anaesthesia to be checked in the laboratory.

What if I need tests that cannot be done during my clinic appointment?

You may need further tests or investigations which will need to be performed at another time. If this happens you will receive an appointment date by telephone or letter. We have listed other types of investigations below.

- **CT (Computerised Tomography) scan**

A CT scan takes x-ray pictures of cross-sections of the inside of your body. The scan takes longer than an x-ray and is painless. You may need an injection of a special dye to highlight any abnormal areas within your body.

For more information ask a member of staff for a copy of the Trust's **Patients having a CT examination** leaflet or download a copy from www.ekhufft.nhs.uk/radiology/patient-leaflets/

- **MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) scan**

This test is like a CT scan but uses magnetism rather than x-rays to produce pictures. During the scan, you will lie down and pass through a scanner, which looks like a small tunnel. Some people may feel claustrophobic during this scan and sedation may be offered to help to reduce your anxiety. An injection of a special dye may also be needed to highlight any abnormal areas within your body.

For more information, please see the **Having an MRI scan** page on the Trust web site www.ekhufft.nhs.uk/mri

What happens next?

This waiting period may be an anxious time and we will try to contact you (as agreed during your consultation) when your results are ready. If further investigations or treatments are needed, we will write to you or make you an appointment in one of the clinics to explain/discuss with you what will be needed. The government's target for telling you the results of your investigations is 28 days from the date your GP referred you to the Rapid Access Clinic.

What if I feel unwell at home?

If you have discomfort after your examination or biopsy, please take simple pain relief (such as paracetamol and ibuprofen) if your doctor has told you that you can. If you feel unwell, please contact your GP or in an emergency go to your nearest Emergency Department.

Contact details

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the:

- **Rapid Access Clinic**

Telephone: 01227 86 42 40

Open Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm, and weekends 8am to 3:30pm,

This leaflet has been produced with and for patients

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff. You can ask someone to contact us on your behalf.

Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 78 31 45, or email ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net

Patients should not bring in large sums of money or valuables into hospital. Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property had been handed in to Trust staff for safe-keeping.

Further patient leaflets are available via the East Kent Hospitals web site www.ekhufft.nhs.uk/patientinformation