

Hystero-contrast-Sonography (HyCoSy)

What is a HyCoSy?

HyCoSy is a test to find out if the fallopian tubes are open or blocked, and also if the cavity of the womb is normal or irregular.

What does it involve?

Normally Mr. Nikolaou and a nurse are present, and usually a sonographer as well. You lie on an examination table in a position similar to having a cervical smear test. Initially you have an ultrasound scan through your vagina, to assess the uterus and ovaries. You then have a speculum to see the cervix (neck of the womb). This is like a smear test. A thin plastic catheter is inserted in the neck of the womb and then the speculum is removed. Through this catheter, a small amount of fluid is inserted in the uterus. This is sterile water mixed with air bubbles and then usually a white liquid, which acts as a contrast medium. While the fluid is inserted in the uterus you have another ultrasound scan through your vagina and the doctor and the sonographer can see the fluid filling up the cavity of the womb and flowing through the fallopian tubes. The procedure takes around 20 min. It does not require an anesthetic or sedation. After the end of the procedure we normally advise you to remain in the centre for another 20min or so, and have a tea to make sure you feel fine before you go. The nurse will be there to look after you throughout the procedure. It is normal to have vaginal discharge or even some bleeding like a period after the procedure, therefore you should bring some sanitary towels with you.

When is it performed?

You cannot have this test while you are on a period. Obviously you cannot have this if you can be pregnant. If you are pregnant the HyCoSy can cause a miscarriage or other problems. Therefore, the best time to have this test is soon after the end of the period and before you ovulate. Ideally you should also have a urinary pregnancy test at home before you come for a HyCoSy. Most women have it in the second week of the menstrual cycle, between days 6 and 10.

What are its benefits?

The HyCoSy is a simple test that is now considered to be the first line investigation of tubal patency. Unlike the hysterosalpingography (HSG), it does not require irradiation. It certainly is much less invasive than a laparoscopy, which is an operation under anaesthetic. It provides information not only about the patency of the fallopian tubes but also about the uterus and the ovaries. Apart from the diagnostic role, it has a possible therapeutic role as it the fluid that is injected through the womb can flush the tubes open and many women get pregnant spontaneously soon after having a HyCoSy.

What are its limitations?

Sometimes it is simply not possible to complete the HyCoSy, if for example, your cervix is too narrow or you find it too uncomfortable. If the HyCoSy does not confirm that the uterine cavity is normal or that the tubes are patent, it will be necessary to plan a more definitive investigation. This is usually a hysteroscopy and/or laparoscopy under anaesthetic. If the HyCoSy shows that the fallopian tubes are patent, this does not mean that they are structurally completely normal. There could be other pathology in your pelvis, such as endometriosis or adhesions, which can only be seen during a laparoscopy under anaesthetic. Even if the fallopian tubes are structurally normal, it does not necessarily mean that they are functioning normally. The fallopian tube is one of the most complex organs of the human body and performs a number of functions, not least to support the human embryo in the first few days of its life.

Are there any contraindications?

You should not have a HyCoSy if you have vaginal bleeding or if there is any possibility at all that you can be pregnant. You cannot have a HyCoSy if you have abnormal vaginal discharge and you think you may have an infection. It will be difficult to complete the HyCoSy if you find the vaginal examinations, like for example a smear test, particularly uncomfortable. You should let us know in advance if you have any known allergies.

Are there any side effects?

Usually the HyCoSy is well tolerated. In a small minority of cases the woman can feel faint or nauseous. This is caused by the rich nerve-supply of the cervix. In extreme cases, (less than 1%) your blood pressure may drop and we may have to give you a small injection to reverse this. It is normal to feel some crampy discomfort in your lower abdomen during and after the examination. This is caused by fluid going inside your uterus and your tummy, which will be absorbed. We normally recommend that you take a couple of painkillers, such as neurofen, half an hour before the procedure. In a small minority of cases the woman may experience more serious discomfort that may last for 24 hours and require painkillers.

Are there any risks?

HyCoSy is a safe procedure and a lot safer than a laparoscopy under anaesthetic. However, you could get an infection (1% chance), therefore we normally give a course of prophylactic antibiotics after the procedure. Also, in rare cases (up to 1%), you could have a more prolonged fainting episode (vasovagal attack) and require an injection or even intravenous fluids (really rarely) to reverse this.

How can I book one?

You need to call Mr. Nikolaou's secretary on 07515 161 203 or 203 303 0436 or by e mail at secretary@fertilityforlife.com as soon as your period starts to book a HyCoSy for the second week of your menstrual cycle. Alternatively you can book at the reception at **Women's Wellness Centre (02077514488)**, but they will have to liaise with Mr. Nikolaou's secretary before they confirm the appointment. The HyCoSy costs £500 and you are invoiced by the Womens Wellness Centre. If you have private insurance we normally request that you settle your invoice on the day and you claim form your insurance afterwards.

Will I need to take time off work?

We usually perform the HyCoSy in the evening and most women are fine to go to work the next day. You may have crampy discomfort and may need painkillers.

Will someone need to be with me?

Not necessarily. We will look after you and make sure you are OK before you go. If your partner or a friend wants to be with you, and even be in during the procedure, holding your hand etc., this is absolutely fine.

What happens after the HyCoSy?

You go home and book an appointment to see Mr. Nikolaou for a follow up consultation once you have completed all the tests that he has organized. In the meantime, the sonographer looks at all the images in detail and sends a report to Mr. Nikolaou. Although we normally talk to you throughout the procedure, we don't discuss the findings or your next steps, treatments etc. immediately after the HyCoSy, partly because you may feel uncomfortable and partly because we need time to study the films and discuss it among ourselves before we reach a conclusion. If you are not a patient of Mr. Nikolaou but have been referred to us only for a HyCoSy by another Consultant we will send the report to your Consultant or you.