

CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING



A Pap test is a simple screening test that can help detect abnormal cell changes in the cervix and prevent cervical cancer.

Cervical Cancer

Cervical cancer is an abnormal growth that starts in the cervix. The cervix is the lower part of the uterus that connects to the vagina.

Causes

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the leading cause of cervical cancer. HPV infections cause changes to cells in the cervix that may turn into cancer when left untreated.

HPV infection is very common and most people who are sexually active will get it at some point in their life. HPV infection often has no signs or symptoms, so testing is key.

Prevention

You can reduce your risk of cervical cancer by having regular Pap tests and getting the HPV vaccine. Getting tested **every 3 years** will help ensure that any changes in your cervix are caught early, when successful treatment is more likely.

Get Tested

Getting regular Pap tests is an important step in protecting your health.

You should still get a Pap test to check your cervix, if you:

- feel healthy & have no symptoms
- are no longer sexually active
- have only had one sexual partner
- are in a same-sex relationship
- have been through menopause
- have received the HPV vaccine
- have no family history of cervical cancer

When to Get Tested

A Pap test is recommended **every three years** for women who are 21 years of age and older who have ever been sexually active.

Women 70 years old and older can stop having Pap tests if they have had three or more normal Pap tests in the past 10 years.

Women who have had a hysterectomy (an operation to remove part or all of the uterus) should talk to their healthcare provider to see if they should continue getting regular Pap tests.

If you are due for cervical cancer screening, talk to your healthcare provider about getting a Pap test at your next appointment.

for more info on HPV



Preparing for a Pap Test



A Pap test is a simple screening test that looks for cell changes in the cervix. These changes can become cancer before you experience any symptoms.

Book an appointment with your healthcare provider and they will do a Pap test for you. Try to book on a day when you don't have your period and avoid having sex or using tampons for 48 hours before the test.

1 You'll undress from the waist down and put on a hospital gown.

2 You will lie on an exam table, potentially with your feet in stirrups.

3 An instrument will be inserted into your vagina to hold it open, to show the cervix.

4 Your healthcare provider will use a small swab or spatula to remove cells from the cervix.

5 The sample taken by your healthcare provider will be sent to a lab for testing.

Results

Both you and your healthcare provider will receive the results of your Pap test.

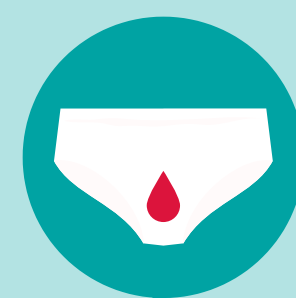
If your test result is **normal**, you'll receive a reminder from the Ontario Cervical Screening Program when you are due for your next Pap test, usually **every 3 years**.

If your results are abnormal, your healthcare provider will arrange for you to have more tests.

Signs & Symptoms

Cervical cancer may not cause any signs or symptoms in its early stages. Symptoms often appear in later stages, when the tumor has spread. Talk to your healthcare provider if you experience any of the following:

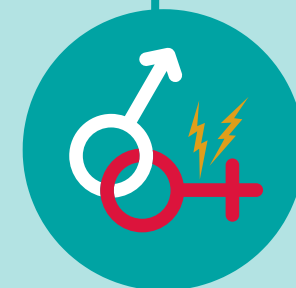
Abnormal vaginal bleeding (ex. between periods, after menopause or after sex)



Abnormal vaginal discharge

Difficulty urinating or having a bowel movement

Pain during sexual intercourse



Pain in the pelvic area or lower back that may go down one leg

Swelling of the leg, often only on one side

Unexplained weight loss, loss of appetite, or fatigue



Uterus

Cervix

Vagina

