

Pap Tests for Good Health!

Make a Pap test part of your regular health check-up!

What is a Pap test?

A Pap test:

- looks for changes in the cells of the cervix (*the opening of the uterus*)
- is done by a doctor, nurse or nurse practitioner.

Why do I need to have a Pap test?

- A Pap test can prevent cancer of the cervix.
- *Regular* Pap tests find cell changes in the cervix early.
- Small changes in the cells of the cervix can sometimes lead to cancer.
- Most early changes can be treated before they become cancer.



Your risk of getting cancer of the cervix increases as you get older.

Who needs a Pap test?

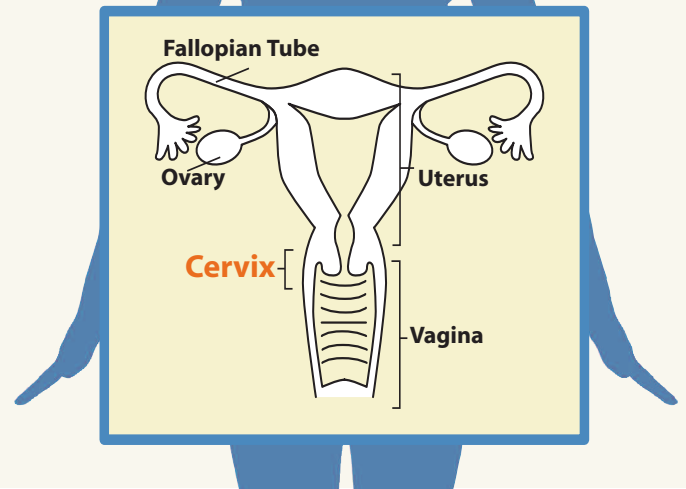
All women who have ever had *any* sexual contact need to have regular Pap tests. This includes:

- women who have had sexual touching with a partner
- women who no longer have sex
- women who have sex with women
- women who have reached menopause (*no more monthly bleeding*).

Some women who have had a hysterectomy may also need to have Pap tests. Talk with your health care provider about what you need!



Your Cervix and nearby organs



How often should I have a Pap test?

- Your first test should happen within 3 years of your first sexual activity.
- If you have normal test results for 3 years in a row then you need a Pap test every 2 to 3 years after that.
- Women aged 70 and over can stop having Pap tests if they have had at least three normal tests in the past 10 years.

If my Pap test shows cell changes, what does this mean?

- For most women, an “abnormal” Pap test does NOT mean you have cancer.
- Often, these cell changes go away without any treatment.
- If they do not go away, you can receive treatment for the cell changes. Your treatment will depend on the kind of cell changes you have and your needs.

Follow your treatment plan. It is the most important thing you can do.



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What is HPV?

- HPV is a common virus called **Human Papillomavirus**.
- It is found in both men and women.
- There are over 100 types of HPV.
 - some HPV types can cause skin or genital warts.
 - other types of HPV can cause cancer of the cervix.

How do people get HPV?

- HPV can spread, through any sexual activity with a partner (such as skin-to-skin contact, oral or anal sex, sexual intercourse or sharing sex toys)
- About 4 out of 5 people who have sex will come into contact with HPV at some time.
- Your body's own defenses (immune system) can often fight off this virus, but that doesn't always happen.
- Most of the time, there are no symptoms. You may not even know that you have HPV.

What is the link between HPV and cancer of the cervix?

- Some types of HPV can cause cell changes (infections) in the cervix.
- Most HPV infections go away on their own.
- Sometimes, they do not and over time, these changes may cause cancer if they are not found early and treated.
- Most women with HPV infection do NOT get cancer of the cervix.



It is hard to avoid HPV if you are sexually active, but you can reduce your risk.

How can I lower my risk of getting HPV?

- Limit the number of sexual partners.
- Use a condom.
- Delay first sexual activity.
- Avoid tobacco.
- Take good care of your health.
- Ask your doctor if you should get HPV vaccine.

What is HPV vaccine?

- It is a vaccine for girls and women 9 to 26 years old.
- It protects against some types of HPV that can cause cancer of the cervix.
- Grade 8 females in Ontario may get the vaccine for free at school.

HPV vaccine does not protect you from all types of HPV. That's why it is very important to have regular Pap tests.

TO LEARN MORE:

- Talk to your doctor, nurse or nurse practitioner.
- Visit the Ontario Cervical Screening Program's website: <http://www.cancercare.on.ca/english/home/pcs/screening/cervscreening/>
- Call the Canadian Cancer Society at: 1-888-939-3333 or visit www.cancer.ca
- Call your local Public Health Unit. Look in your local telephone book for the number or visit: http://www.alphaweb.org/ont_health_units.asp
- Visit the Government of Ontario's website: www.hpvontario.ca or call the INFOLine at 1-866-559-4598.



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