

A routine Pap test could save your life.
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF
your friends and family will be glad you did.

Don't just sit there.
Have a Routine Pap test.

*"Unless your doctor tells you
otherwise, have a Pap test
every three years."*



*Where does your health
information go?*

You should know that when you have a Pap test your health information is secured in the laboratory and Provincial Cytology Registry. To provide you with the highest quality health services, the Cervical Screening Initiatives Program uses unidentified information to assist with health services planning and evaluation.

For more information contact your health care provider, public health nurse or:

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Cervical Screening Initiatives
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This program is administered by Western Health.



How far will you go...
to prevent cervical cancer?
Go the Distance!



*A routine Pap test can prevent
almost all cancer of the cervix!*

*Don't just sit there...
have a routine Pap test!*

What is a Pap test?

A Pap test is a simple test that can help prevent cancer of the cervix. It is a way to pick up any changes in the cells of your cervix. While some women feel uncomfortable or embarrassed, those few minutes could save your life.

Why have a Pap test?

A routine Pap test can find cell changes at an early stage, when women have no signs or symptoms of being ill. If found early and treated, these changes will not develop into cancer. Pap tests find most cases of abnormal cervical cells, but no screening test is perfect. Repeat tests ensure accuracy.



When should you have a Pap test?

If you have ever been sexually active you should start Pap testing at age 20. Young women should visit their health care provider for a health care check and to talk about birth control, and sexually transmitted infections (STI's). If you have had a hysterectomy (removal of your uterus) you may still need a Pap test. A woman whose cervix is not completely removed, or a woman who has had abnormal results on previous Pap tests, should continue to have a Pap test after a hysterectomy. At age 70, a woman with a good record of Pap testing may stop screening.

*"If you're sexually active,
start Pap testing at age 20."*

How do you get ready for a Pap test?

To obtain a good Pap test, it is best if you:

- Have not douched or used birth control creams or jellies for 48 hours
- Have not had sex for 24 hours
- Are not having your period

If you are able to follow this advice, the lab will receive a better cell sample.

How is a Pap test done?

When you go for a Pap test, you will be asked to lie down on an examining table and to slide your bottom down. Your feet are put in foot rests and you will be asked to relax and to let your knees fall to the side. An instrument, called a speculum, is gently placed in your vagina. The speculum opens up your vagina, just a bit, so your cervix can be seen more clearly. Cells are gently taken from your cervix using a brush. These cells are then sent to the lab for further testing.

How often do you need a Pap test?

Unless your doctor or health care provider tells you otherwise, have a Pap test once a year for 3 years in a row. If all results are normal, begin having Pap tests every 3 years. Women with abnormal history or other health concerns may continue yearly testing.

*"Have a Pap test once a year
for three years in a row.
If your results are normal,
have a Pap test every three years."*

What causes cancer of the cervix?

Most cervical cell changes are caused by a common virus called the human papilloma virus (HPV). HPV is passed during sexual contact. There is no treatment for HPV, in most cases it will go away on its own. If your Pap test indicated that cells have been affected by HPV, you will be followed more closely until cells return to normal. If the changes continue, further tests may be necessary.

A vaccine is available for young women that may help prevent infection with the types of HPV that cause most cases of cervical cancer. Regular Pap tests are still necessary.

Women can reduce their risk of developing cancer of the cervix by:

- *Having a routine Pap test
- *Limiting their number of sexual partners
- *Not having sex at an early age
- *Not smoking
- *Receiving the HPV vaccine