

What if I have questions about my Pap smear?

- Talk with your health care provider.
- Don't be afraid to ask any questions you have.

Does having HPV increase my chance of getting cancer of the cervix?

- Certain types of HPV are associated with cancer of the cervix.
- If you have been infected with HPV, it is important to get Pap smears at the times your health care provider recommends.
- If any cancer or pre-cancer develops, it can be found early and treated.

How can I reduce my risk of cancer of the cervix?

- **GET A PAP SMEAR** every year or as often as recommended by your health care provider.
- **DO NOT SMOKE.** It doubles your chance of getting cancer of the cervix.
- **EAT HEALTHY FOODS** including dark green leafy vegetables, red/orange/yellow fruits and vegetables, and whole grain foods. These foods help the cervix heal.
- **CONSIDER DECISIONS ABOUT SEX VERY CAREFULLY.** The younger you begin having sex, the greater your risk for developing cancer of the cervix. Abstinence is the only 100% way to avoid the risk of HIV/AIDS and STDs.
- **BEING ABSTINENT — NOT HAVING SEX,** prevents sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) including HIV/AIDS and greatly reduces your risk for cancer of the cervix.
- **IF YOU DO HAVE SEX —**

Sex with only one STD-free, lifelong partner is the safest sex.

Otherwise, limit the number of your sexual partners.

Do not have sex with anyone who has an STD; always use a condom for sex.

The more people you have sex with — the greater your risk for STDs, HIV/AIDS and cancer of the cervix.



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What
is a
Pap
Smear?

What is a Pap smear?



- A Pap smear is a test that checks the cells on the cervix (the opening of the uterus) for changes which could lead to cancer.
- During a pelvic exam, the health care provider inserts a speculum into the vagina and collects some cells from the cervix with a swab.
- It is usually not painful, and only takes a few minutes.

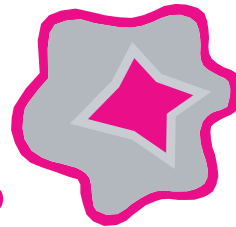
Why is a Pap smear so important?



- Women who have cancer of the cervix may not have any symptoms.
- Regular Pap smears and treatment when needed can prevent most cancer of the cervix.
- If cancer or pre-cancer develops, it can be found early and treated.

When should I start getting Pap smears?

- If you have ever had sex (penis in vagina)
or
- If you are 18 years or older

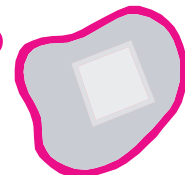


How often should I get a Pap smear?

- Most women need to have a Pap smear once a year.
- Talk to your health care provider about your individual situation.

When is the best time for a Pap smear?

- 1–2 weeks after your period is over.
- After any bleeding from the vagina has stopped.
- After any infection in the vagina has been treated and cleared.



How do I get ready for a Pap smear?



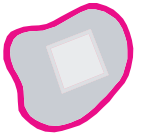
- Do not have sex (penis in the vagina) for 48 hours before the test.
- Do not put anything in the vagina for 48 hours before the test, including tampons, douches, cervical caps, diaphragms, creams or foams.

How will I know what my Pap smear result is?



- The Pap smear is sent to a lab. The results are sent from the lab to your health care provider who will contact you if your Pap smear is NOT normal.

What does my Pap smear result mean?



- **NORMAL.** This is good. The cervical cells are healthy. If previous Pap smears have also been normal, you won't need a Pap smear for at least 1 year.
- **UNSATISFACTORY for EVALUATION.** The slide cannot be read. Causes include douching, bleeding, infection, or not enough cells on the slide. The Pap smear should probably be repeated in 2–3 months.
- **BENIGN.** The Pap smear showed infection, irritation or normal cell repair. If you have an infection, you may need medication. Otherwise, your health care provider will most likely recommend another Pap smear in 1 year.
- **ASCUS.** (Atypical cells of undetermined significance) — The Pap smear showed some abnormal changes in the cells, but the cause is not clear. Infection is a common cause, and you may be given medication. Your health care provider will most likely recommend another Pap smear in 3–6 months.
- **LOW GRADE CHANGES.** This may indicate you have been infected with the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). Some types of HPV are associated with an increased risk for cancer of the cervix. Your health care provider will recommend specific follow-up. This may include another Pap smear in 3–6 months or a colposcopy. A colposcopy is looking at the cervix with a high power microscope.
- **HIGH GRADE CHANGES.** The cells of the cervix may progress toward cancer, but they are not cancer yet. Less than half of women with this test result will develop cancer. Colposcopy is needed. Biopsy and treatment may be necessary. **Treatment is very important — but waiting a few weeks is okay.**