

Information

Pap tests after hysterectomy

What is a Pap test?

The Pap test is a quick and simple test used to check for changes to the cells of the cervix that may lead to cervical cancer. When detected early, changes to the cells of the cervix are easy to treat. That is why having a Pap test every two years is so important.

About 70 per cent of cases of cervical cancer occur in women older than 40 years, which means having a Pap test is even more important as women get older. Menopause does not protect women from cervical cancer and women who are no longer sexually active are still at risk.

What is a hysterectomy?

A hysterectomy is an operation to remove the uterus. In most cases the cervix is removed as well and in some cases the Fallopian tubes and ovaries are also removed. Types of hysterectomy are illustrated over the page. The shaded areas show the parts of the female reproductive system that have been removed.

After a hysterectomy a woman no longer menstruates and cannot become pregnant. A hysterectomy is most often performed to treat conditions such as heavy bleeding, fibroids, endometriosis or prolapse. In a small number of cases, a hysterectomy is part of the treatment for cancers such as cancer of the uterus or ovarian cancer.

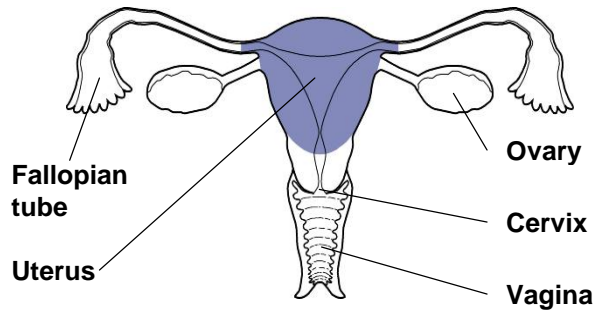
Do women who have had a hysterectomy need Pap tests?

It is important that women talk about future Pap tests with their doctor. Women will still need regular Pap tests or vaginal smears/vault smears (where a cell sample is taken from the top of the vagina) if they:

- still have a cervix
- had a hysterectomy as part of treatment for a gynaecological cancer (e.g. cervical, ovarian, endometrial, vaginal cancer)
- have ever had a significant abnormality detected on a Pap test
- have never had a Pap test.

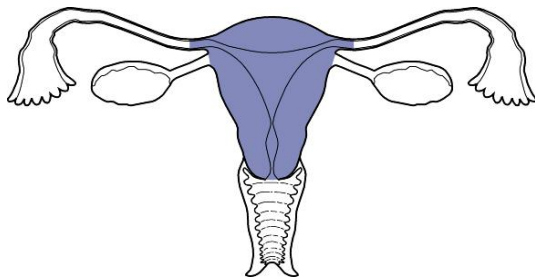
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Pap tests after hysterectomy



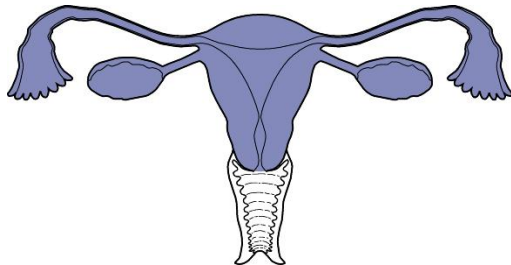
Sub-total or partial hysterectomy:

Involves removal of the upper part of the uterus only, keeping the cervix, Fallopian tubes and ovaries.



Total hysterectomy:

Involves removal of the uterus and cervix, while keeping the Fallopian tubes and ovaries.



Total hysterectomy with salpingo-oophorectomy:

Involves removal of the uterus and cervix, together with one or both sets of ovaries and Fallopian tubes.

What if a woman doesn't know what type of hysterectomy she had?

Many women do not know exactly what type of hysterectomy they had so it is important they find out from their doctor. If the doctor has no records of the operation an internal examination or a cell sample may be required.

For more information about hysterectomy and Pap tests contact your local doctor or health service, visit papscreen.org.au or call the Cancer Council Helpline on 13 11 20.

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