

# Information

## The Pap test: a way to prevent cervical cancer

### What is cervical cancer?

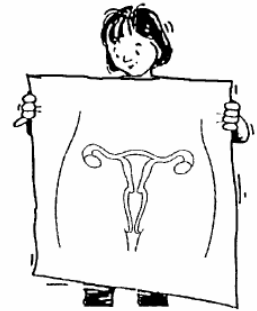
Cervical cancer is cancer of the cervix. The cervix is located between the uterus and the vagina.

### Who needs a Pap test?

All women aged between 18 and 70 years who have ever been sexually active need to have a Pap test every two years.

### What is a Pap test?

The Pap test is a simple test to check for changes to the cells of the cervix that may lead to cervical cancer. The Pap test only takes a couple of minutes.



The Pap test is taken in the following way:

- A doctor or nurse will do the test. You will need to undress from the waist down and lie on your back or side.
- The doctor or nurse will insert an instrument called a speculum into the vagina. The speculum opens the vagina so that the cervix can be seen clearly.
- The test should not be painful but may be a bit uncomfortable. If the Pap test hurts, tell the doctor or nurse immediately.
- The doctor or nurse will take a sample of cells from the cervix using a small spatula or brush and place them onto a glass slide.



Results are usually available within two weeks. Speak to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns about your Pap test.

*Please turn over...*

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### **What if my results are abnormal?**



If your results are abnormal, this does not mean you have cancer. One in 10 Pap test results may have abnormal changes. Most of these changes are minor infections that can be easily treated or clear up on their own. If you have abnormal changes, your doctor will talk with you about the best treatment. This may include more frequent Pap tests.

### **Why every two years?**

Most cases of cervical cancer take at least 10 years to develop. Having a Pap test every two years makes sure that if any changes are present, they can be treated before they turn into cancer.

### **Where can you have a Pap test?**

You can have it at a:

- medical practice (GP or doctor)
- community health centre
- family planning clinic
- sexual health centre.

When making your appointment, you can ask to see a female doctor or nurse. If you have any other special needs such as a longer appointment or interpreter, let them know at this time.

You can ask a relative or friend to come with you to your appointment. The details of your appointment and results are confidential.

**For more information about Pap tests visit [papscreen.org.au](http://papscreen.org.au) or call the Cancer Council on 13 11 20.**

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