

Information

Pap tests after hysterectomy

What is a Pap test?

The Pap test is a simple test used to check for changes to the cells of the cervix that may lead to cervical cancer. When found 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 cervical cancers happen in women aged over 40 years. This means that 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. In some cases, the Fallopian tubes and ovaries are also removed. Types of hysterectomy are illustrated over the page.

After a hysterectomy, a woman no longer menstruates (has a period) and cannot become pregnant. A hysterectomy is usually done to treat heavy bleeding, fibroids, endometriosis or prolapse. In a small number of cases, a hysterectomy is part of the treatment for cancers such as those of the uterus or ovaries.

Do women who have had a hysterectomy need Pap tests?

It is important that women talk about 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:

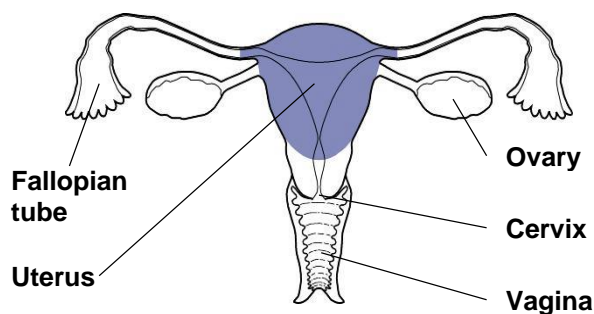
- still have a cervix
- had a hysterectomy as part of treatment for a cancer (e.g. cervical, ovarian, endometrial, vaginal cancer)
- have ever had a significant abnormality found on a Pap test
- have never had a Pap test.

Please turn over...

Pap tests after hysterectomy

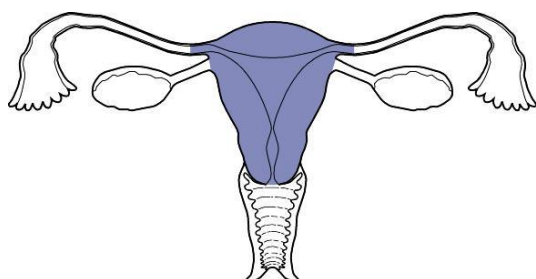
Types of hysterectomy

Types of hysterectomy are illustrated below. The shaded areas show the parts of the female reproductive system that have been removed.



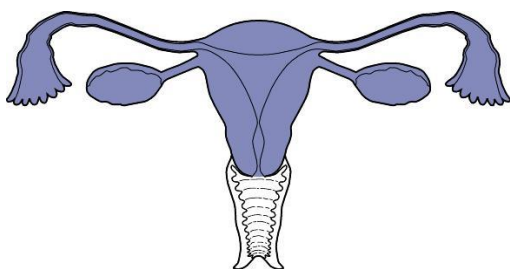
Sub-total or partial hysterectomy:

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



Total hysterectomy:

Involves taking out the uterus and cervix, while keeping the Fallopian tubes and ovaries.



Total hysterectomy with salpingo-oophorectomy:

Involves taking out 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. It is important they find out from their doctor. If the doctor has no record of the operation, an internal examination or a cell sample may be needed.

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

October 2012