

# *What is a Pap test?*



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

## *Why is a Pap test so important?*

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

## *When should I start getting Pap tests?*

- You should have your first Pap test within three years after you begin having sex but
- You should have a Pap test no later than 21 years of age

## *How often should I get a Pap test?*

- Most women need to have a Pap test regularly, at least once every three years.
- Some women need Pap tests more often. Talk to your health care provider about your individual situation.

## *When is the best time for a Pap test?*

- One to two 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 test?*

- 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 foam.

## *How will I know what my Pap test result is?*

- The Pap test is sent to a lab. Results are sent from the lab to your health care provider.
- Your health care provider will contact you if your Pap test is not normal.

# What does my Pap

**Negative** (for intraepithelial lesions or malignant cells) — The Pap test showed there were no cancer cells. Sometimes the Pap test will show an infection. If you have an infection, you may need medication. Your health care provider will recommend when to get your next Pap test.

**ASC-US** (atypical cells of undetermined significance) — The Pap test showed some abnormal cells, but the cause is not clear. Your health care provider may recommend:

- Repeating the Pap test at least two times over an eight to 12 month period to check the abnormal cells
- A colposcopy (looking at the cervix with a high powered microscope) and taking cervical cells to be examined in the lab
- Testing for human papillomavirus (HPV). Though usually harmless, some types of HPV cause cervical cancer.

**ASC-H** (atypical squamous cells) — The Pap test showed cells at a high risk to become cervical cancer. A colposcopy (looking at the cervix with a high powered microscope) is needed and a cell sample will be examined in the lab.

## *test result mean?*

**LSIL** (low grade squamous intraepithelial lesions) — Most of the time mild cell changes are due to human papillomavirus (HPV) which is a virus. Low grade changes can develop into high grade changes. Colposcopy (looking at the cervix with a high powered microscope) is recommended. Management options may vary if the woman is pregnant, postmenopausal, or an adolescent.

**HSIL** (high grade squamous intraepithelial lesions) — The cells of the cervix may progress toward cancer, but they are not cancer yet. Less than one-half of the 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.**)

**AGC** (atypical glandular cells) – These cell changes are a serious, but rare finding on a Pap test result. A colposcopy is needed and a cell sample will be examined in the lab.

**AIS** (adenocarcinoma in situ) – Malignant (cancerous cells) tumor originating from glandular tissue. A colposcopy is needed and a cell sample will be examined in the lab.



## *What if I have questions about my Pap test?*

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

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

- Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a very common virus passed from the skin of one person to another during sex. There are many types of HPV. Though usually harmless, a few types can slowly lead to cancer of the cervix if not treated.
- Most HPV types do not have symptoms. Getting a Pap test regularly is important to your health.
- Cervical cancer can be prevented if abnormal cells are found and treated early.

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

**Get a Pap test** 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.

**Take sex seriously** — the younger you begin having sex, the greater your risk for developing cancer of the cervix.

**Not having sex** can prevent sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) 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. STDs are diseases you get by having sexual contact (vaginal, oral, or anal) with someone who already has an STD. Otherwise, limit the number of your sexual partners. Do not have sex with anyone who has an STD and always use a condom. The more people you have sex with, the greater your risk for STDs and cancer of the cervix.

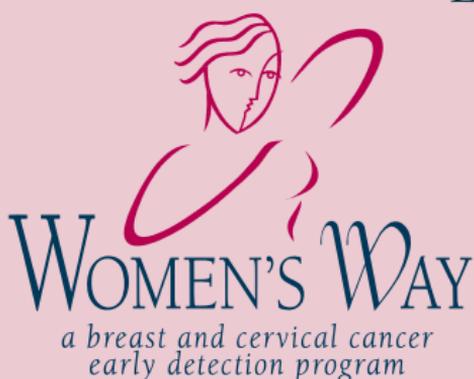


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Cervical Cancer Survivor

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