





## A Pap test is commonly used to screen for cervical cancer.

A Pap test is a procedure to collect cells from the surface of the cervix and vagina. A piece of cotton, a brush, or a small wooden stick is used to gently scrape cells from the cervix and vagina. The cells are viewed under a microscope to find out if they are abnormal. This procedure is also called a Pap smear. A new method of collecting and viewing cells has been developed, in which the cells are placed into a liquid before being placed on a slide. It is not known if the new method will work better than the standard method to reduce the number of deaths from cervical cancer.

## After certain positive Pap test results, an HPV test may be done.

An HPV test is a laboratory test that is used to check DNA or RNA for certain types of HPV infection. Cells are collected from the cervix and DNA or RNA from the cells is checked to find out if there is an infection caused by a type of human papilloma virus that is linked to cervical cancer. This test may be done using the sample of cells removed during a Pap test. This test may also be done if the results of a Pap test show certain abnormal cervical cells. When both the HPV test and Pap test are done using cells from the sample removed during a Pap test, it is called a Pap/HPV cotest.

## The Pap test is not a helpful screening test for cervical cancer in the following groups of women

- Women who are younger than 21 years.
- Women who have had a total hysterectomy (surgery to remove the uterus and cervix) for a condition that is not cancer.
- Women who are aged 65 years or older and have a Pap test result that shows no abnormal cells. These women are very unlikely to have abnormal Pap test results in the future.



\* ***The decision about how often to have a Pap test is best made by you and your doctor.***

### KEY POINTS

- **Ask your doctor about the HPV vaccine.** Receiving a vaccination to prevent HPV infection may reduce your risk of cervical cancer and other HPV-related cancers. Ask your doctor whether an HPV vaccine is appropriate for you.
- **Have routine Pap tests.** Pap tests can detect precancerous conditions of the cervix, so they can be monitored or treated in order to prevent cervical cancer. Most medical organizations suggest beginning routine Pap tests at age 21 and repeating them every few years.
- **Practice safe sex.** Reduce your risk of cervical cancer by taking measures to prevent sexually transmitted infections, such as using a condom every time you have sex and limiting the number of sexual partners you have.
- **Don't smoke.** If you don't smoke, don't start. If you do smoke, talk to your doctor about strategies to help you quit.

### ***For more information, Consult***

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