

What can I do to reduce my risk of developing cervical cancer?

- If you have ever been sexually active you should have Pap tests regularly starting at age 25 (or 3 years after becoming sexually active, whichever is later), unless your healthcare provider tells you otherwise.
- Have a Pap test once every 3 years.
- Protect yourself from HPV.
- Consider limiting tobacco use and second-hand smoke exposure. Women who use tobacco and have HPV have a higher risk of cervical cancer.

To learn more about Pap tests, see the brochure ***Do I Really Need a Pap Test?*** available at www.screeningforlife.ca/aboriginal or by calling 1-866-727-3926

Remember

Having Pap tests regularly:

- can find abnormal cell changes early
- helps prevent up to 90% of cervical cancer
- is important even if you are vaccinated against HPV



About the Alberta Cervical Cancer Screening Program

The Alberta Cervical Cancer Screening Program (ACCSP) is coordinated by Alberta Health Services in partnership with healthcare providers. The ACCSP mails Pap test results to women. The program also sends reminder letters if women are overdue for their next Pap test. The program operates in some parts of Alberta and will expand throughout the province in the near future. Visit www.screeningforlife.ca to find out whether the ACCSP sends letters to women in your area.

To get letters from the ACCSP your name and address must be up to date with Alberta Health and Wellness; call 310-0000 (toll free) then dial 780-427-1432.

Screening is one of the best things you can do for yourself to prevent cervical cancer. Breast, cervical, and colorectal cancer screening saves lives.

For more information please contact
Cancer Screening Programs
Phone 1-866-727-3926
Fax 1-888-944-3388
www.screeningforlife.ca/aboriginal

Local contact information



Alberta Cervical Cancer
Screening Program



JUNE 2016

Cervical012

Cervical Screening

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) What You Need to Know and Do



**SCREENING
FOR LIFE.CA**

Pap tests and HPV vaccination can prevent most cervical cancer.

What is human papillomavirus (HPV)?

HPV is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections (STI).

- About 45 types of HPV are spread by skin-to-skin sexual contact.
- HPV is very common and over 70% of sexually active people will get HPV in their lifetime.
- Most people who are infected with HPV never show any symptoms.
- The body's immune system usually clears the virus within 2 years.

Does HPV cause cervical cancer?

Some types of high risk HPV cause cervical cell changes if the HPV infection does not go away. If untreated, these cell changes can develop over many years into cervical cancer.

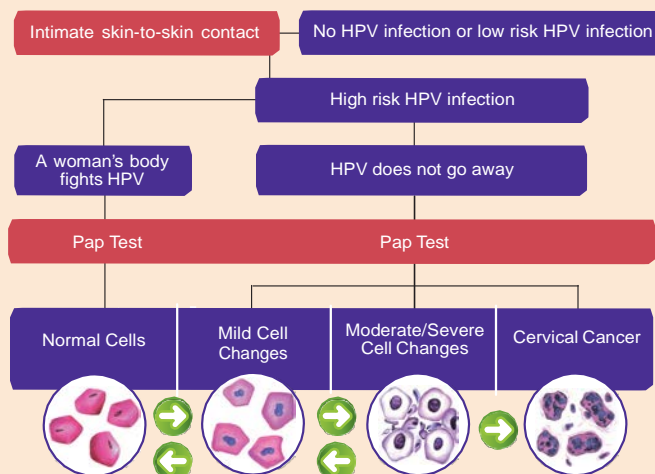
Some other types of HPV can cause genital warts when the virus does not go away on its own.

Regular Pap tests can find abnormal cells caused by HPV infections BEFORE they develop into cancer.

How does someone get HPV?

Genital HPV is spread easily by skin-to-skin contact in the genital area (touching, oral sex, or intercourse) with a partner of either sex.

HPV can go undetected for many years. For most people, it is difficult to know when they were infected or who infected them.



How do I know if I have HPV?

HPV testing may tell you if you have a certain type of high risk HPV at the time of testing. HPV testing also helps decide whether a woman with borderline cell changes should go for more specialized tests. This is done by testing a sample from the woman's Pap test for high risk HPV.

HPV testing is not recommended for women younger than 30. HPV is very common in younger women and usually goes away on its own. HPV testing is fairly new in Canada and is not currently used regularly in Alberta. Talk to your healthcare provider if you would like more information about HPV testing.

Can HPV be treated?

The HPV infection itself can't be treated to make it go away. But abnormal cervical cell changes and genital warts caused by HPV can be treated.

- For more information on abnormal cell treatment see our brochure **Making Sense of Abnormal Pap Test Results** available at www.screeningofrlife.ca/aboriginal or by calling 1-866-727-3926.
- Talk with your healthcare provider to find out more about genital wart treatment.

What is the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine protects against 2 types of HPV that cause about 70% of all cervical cancer. The vaccine approved by Health Canada also prevents 90% of genital warts.

The Alberta immunization program offers the vaccine to all girls in Grade 5. Until 2012, it will also be offered to girls in Grade 9. This program is free of charge. If you are not covered by the school-based program, there is a cost for the vaccine.

The vaccine works best when given before sexual activity begins. Sexually active women may still benefit from the vaccine as well.

If you are thinking about getting the HPV vaccine or have questions:

- talk with your healthcare provider
- visit www.health.alberta.ca/health-info/imm-HPV.html

With the HPV vaccine, do I still need Pap tests?

Yes, you still need Pap tests regularly even if you are vaccinated against HPV.

The HPV vaccine does not protect against all the types of HPV that cause cervical cancer.

What can I do to reduce my risk of getting HPV?

Talk to your healthcare provider about the HPV vaccine.

Consider practicing safer sex:

- limit the number of sexual partners you have (your partners' sexual history is also important)
- use condoms (condoms offer some protection against HPV)
- start sexual activity later in life