

Your health and wellness matter. Finding cancer early can save your life.

Cervical Cancer Screening for the 2SLGBTQI+ Community

Primary Care Alberta Screening Programs welcomes people of every sex, gender identity and sexual orientation to screen for cancer. Before getting screened, it's recommended to speak with your healthcare provider about your personal cancer risk level and whether screening is right for you.

Why is screening important?

Over time, abnormal cell changes in the cervix¹ caused by human papillomavirus (HPV), can lead to cervical cancer. With screening, cervical cancer is one of the most preventable cancers.

When is cervical cancer screening recommended?

✔ **Consider getting screened regularly if you're between the ages of 25 and 69 years old, have a cervix¹, and have ever had sexual contact with anyone of any gender. Including if:**

- You've had bottom surgery to create a cervix.
- You've had a hysterectomy but your cervix wasn't removed.
- You're taking testosterone and still have a cervix. It's important to tell your healthcare provider and the lab because testosterone can affect your Pap test results.

If you're between the ages of 25 and 49, plan to have a **Pap test every 3 years**. Start at age 25 (or 3 years after your first sexual contact, whichever is later), unless your healthcare provider tells you otherwise.

If you're between the ages of 50 and 69, plan to have a **cervical screening test every 5 years** or every 3 years if you have a weakened immune system.

✔ **It's important to have cervical cancer screening regularly, even if:**

- You've only had 1 sexual partner.
- You've had the HPV vaccine.
- You've been through menopause.
- You're no longer sexually active.
- You're a lesbian, bisexual or queer woman.
- You feel healthy and have no symptoms of cervical cancer.

Visit screeningforlife.ca/cervical to learn more.

Should I get screened?

In Alberta, there are 2 tests for cervical cancer screening. The Pap test has been used for many years to look for abnormal cells in the cervix. Starting in November 2025, women and people with a cervix aged 50 to 69 will be screened by their healthcare provider with the cervical screening test instead of the Pap test. This test looks for high-risk types of HPV that can cause cervical cancer. People of any gender identity or sexual orientation who have a cervix and have ever had sexual contact should consider their need for cervical cancer screening.

When is cervical cancer screening not recommended?

✘ **Screening is not recommended if:**

- You're younger than 25 years old.
- You haven't had sex or sexual contact, or it's been less than 3 years since your first sexual contact.
- You don't have a cervix¹.
- You've had a complete hysterectomy including your cervix removed.
 - You may still need regular testing if you have a personal history of abnormal Pap tests. Like a Pap test, a sample of cells is taken from your vaginal vault.

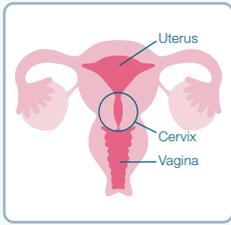
Vaginal vault: This means that a sample of cells is taken from the area where the cervix was located. This is sometimes called a 'vault smear'.

i **Sexual contact includes any skin-to-skin contact in the genital area, including touching, oral sex or intercourse with a partner of any sex or genital contact with shared sex toys.**

¹ We recognize that many gender diverse people may use different words for their body parts. We use the biological terms as a practice but patients have the right to request that their healthcare providers use different words for their safety and comfort.



What happens during cervical cancer screening?



A healthcare provider will ask you to undress from the waist down in private and give you a sheet to cover your legs. As you lie on an exam table, the healthcare provider will put an instrument called a speculum into the vagina¹. This helps them see the cervix¹ and take a sample of cells. The sample will be sent to the lab and checked for HPV or any abnormal cells that may lead to cancer.

Building a relationship with your healthcare provider before cervical cancer screening can help you feel more comfortable during your test. Know that you can pause, slow or stop the screening at any time. If you wish to bring someone with you to your appointment, please let the clinic know when you book your appointment.

What are the benefits and risks of having cervical cancer screening?

+ Benefits

- **Lives saved:** 90% of cervical cancer can be prevented with early diagnosis and treatment.
- **Screening is safe and effective:** Regular screenings check for HPV or abnormal cervical cell changes, which can be followed closely or treated to make sure they clear up.
- **Easier treatment:** If abnormal cells are found, they can be treated early, which may mean less treatment and less time spent recovering.
- **Peace of mind:** You may feel better knowing that you're taking steps to protect your health and wellness.

⚠ Risks

- **False negatives:** There's a chance the screening test may miss abnormal cell changes or HPV, even when they're present.
- **False positives:** There's a chance the screening test may suggest abnormal cell changes or HPV are present, even when they're not.
- **Over-detection:** Cervical cancer screening can find cell changes that may go away on their own. This can lead to additional follow-up tests and appointments.
- **Follow-up and anxiety:** Abnormal results may lead to stress and the need for follow-up tests.

Screening can be worrying for some people due to previous trauma, gender dysphoria or a lack of trust in healthcare settings. It can be difficult to make cervical screening a priority, especially if you're concerned about experiencing discrimination. All patients have the right to receive healthcare without discrimination. Talk to your healthcare provider about your personal screening needs and ways to make screening more comfortable for you.

How can I get screened?

Getting your cervical cancer screening

Your healthcare provider can do your Pap or cervical screening test in their clinic or refer you to another provider of your choice.

If you need a healthcare provider:

- Visit albertafindadoctor.ca
- Call Health Link at 8-1-1
- Visit search.cpsa.ca

For more information:



Screening Programs

Tel: 1-866-727-3926

Web: screeningforlife.ca

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