



Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable cancers.

If you're between the ages of 25 and 49, have a Pap test every 3 years.

Are there any risks to Pap tests?

- A Pap test can miss abnormal cell changes. This is one reason why it's important to have Pap tests regularly.
- An abnormal result can be very stressful.
- Pap tests can find changes that might go away on their own. Following up on these changes may mean extra tests are needed.

Talk to your healthcare provider about these risks.

Where do I go for a Pap test?

- Make an appointment with your healthcare provider.
- If you need a healthcare provider or want to go to a women's health clinic:
 - Call Health Link Alberta at 8-1-1
 - Visit informalberta.ca
 - Visit search.cpsa.ca

About the Alberta Cervical Cancer Screening Program

The Alberta Cervical Cancer Screening Program in Primary Care Alberta is a province-wide organized screening program. The program works together with healthcare providers to encourage eligible women and people with a cervix to get screened for cervical cancer. The program also sends personalized correspondence about screening.

To get letters from the program, your name and address must be up to date with Primary and Preventative Health Services. To update your information, call 310-000 (toll free) then dial 780-427-1432.

If you do not wish to receive letters from the program, call 1-866-727-3926.

Cancer screening

Getting screened for cancer regularly is the best way to find it early, before you have any symptoms and when treatment is likely to work best. Alberta currently has provincial screening programs for breast, cervical and colorectal cancer.

For more information, visit screeningforlife.ca or call Primary Care Alberta Screening Programs at 1-866-727-3926.

Cervical Screening

Do I really need a Pap test?

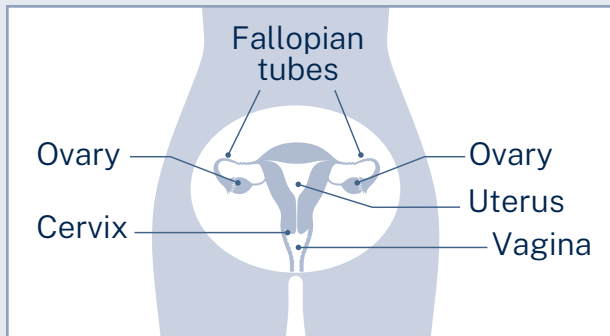


screeningforlife.ca/cervical

90% of cervical cancer can be prevented with regular Pap tests

What is a Pap test?

A Pap test checks for changes in the cells of your cervix. It's done in a healthcare provider's office, only takes a few minutes, and can save your life. An instrument called a speculum is gently inserted into your vagina so the cervix can be seen. Cells are carefully collected from the cervix and sent to the laboratory to be checked under a microscope. If any cell changes are found, they should be followed closely. If needed, they can be treated so that cancer doesn't develop.



Should I have a Pap test?

- If you've ever been sexually active, you should have Pap tests regularly starting at age 25, or 3 years after becoming sexually active, whichever is later.
- Being sexually active means having any skin-to-skin contact in the genital area. This includes touching, oral sex, or intercourse with a partner of any sex.
- Regular cervical cancer screening should be part of your health routine until you're at least 70. The risk (chance) of getting cervical cancer doesn't decrease with age, so continued regular screening is very important.
- If you've had a hysterectomy, talk to your healthcare provider about whether you still need to have Pap tests.

You still need Pap tests regularly even if:

- You've had the HPV vaccine.
- You feel healthy.
- You're no longer sexually active.
- You've had sexual contact with only 1 person.
- You've had the same sexual partner for a long time.
- You've not had sexual contact in a long time or are no longer sexually active.
- You're in a same-sex relationship.
- You've been through menopause.
- You have no family history of cervical cancer.

How often should I have a Pap test?

Follow these instructions unless your healthcare provider tells you otherwise:

- If you're between the ages of 25 and 49, plan to have a Pap test every 3 years.
- Once you turn 50, you'll start having a cervical screening test instead of a Pap test. 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.

Tell your healthcare provider if you start bleeding between periods or after sexual intercourse.

Your healthcare provider may wish to see you more often for other health concerns.

How do I get ready for a Pap test?

- Try to make the appointment for a day when you won't have your period.
- Don't douche or use contraceptive creams or jellies 24 hours before the test.
- Don't have sexual intercourse 24 hours before the test.
- Avoid using personal lubricants 48 hours before the test.

What is the link between HPV and cervical cancer?

- HPV is a group of viruses that affect different parts of the body. Almost all cervical cancer is caused by high-risk HPV.
- High-risk HPV is spread easily by sexual contact.
- HPV is a very common virus that affects women and men. Over 70% of people will get HPV at some time in their life.
- Most people with high-risk HPV never have symptoms.
- 90% of HPV infections in women clear up on their own.
- **While HPV is very common, most women with HPV will NOT develop cervical cancer.**
- Pap tests check for cervical cell changes caused by HPV. Any abnormal changes can be followed closely to make sure they clear up. If needed, these abnormal cells can be treated so cervical cancer doesn't develop.
- In rare cases, if an HPV infection doesn't clear up after many years, it can lead to cervical cancer.

To learn more about HPV, visit screeningforlife.ca or call 1-866-727-3926.

What can I do to reduce my risk?

- **Have a Pap test regularly.**
- Talk to your healthcare provider about the HPV vaccine and whether it's right for you.
- Even if you've had the HPV vaccine, get a Pap test regularly. The vaccine doesn't protect against all types of HPV that can cause cervical cancer.
- Consider limiting the number of sexual partners you have - each new partner increases your risk (chance) of getting HPV.
- Condom use can lower your risk of HPV. But, condoms can only protect areas of skin where the condom comes between each person. The virus may still pass when skin touches skin not covered by the condom.
- Don't smoke, and limit second-hand smoke exposure. Tobacco exposure in women with HPV increases the risk of cervical cancer.