

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

## Cervical Cancer Screening for the 2SLGBTQI+ Community

Alberta Health Services Screening Programs welcomes people of every sex, gender identity and sexual orientation to screen for cancer. Before getting screened, it is 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 cervix<sup>1</sup> caused by human papillomavirus, or HPV, can lead to cervical cancer. With screening, cervical cancer is one of the most preventable cancers.

## Should I get screened?

A Pap test checks the cervix<sup>1</sup> for any abnormal cell changes. People of any gender identity or sexual orientation who have a cervix and have had sexual contact should consider their need for Pap tests.

## When are Pap tests recommended?

✔ Consider getting regular Pap tests if you're between 25 and 69 years old, have a cervix<sup>1</sup>, and have had sexual contact with anyone of any gender. Including if:

- You had bottom surgery to create a cervix
- You 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.

Plan to have a Pap test **once 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.

✔ It's important to have Pap tests 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](https://screeningforlife.ca/cervical) to learn more

## When are Pap tests not recommended?

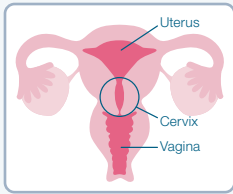
✘ Pap tests are not recommended if:

- 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 cervix<sup>1</sup>
- You 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](#).

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.

<sup>1</sup> 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 a Pap test?



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 vagina<sup>1</sup>. This helps them see the cervix<sup>1</sup> and take a sample of cells. The sample will be sent to the lab and checked for any abnormal cells that may lead to cancer.

- Building a relationship with your healthcare provider before getting a Pap test can help you feel more comfortable during your test. Know that you can pause, slow or stop the Pap test 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 a Pap Test?

### + Benefits

- **Lives saved:** 90% of cervical cancer can be prevented with early diagnosis and treatment.
- **Screening is safe and effective:** Regular Pap tests check for 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 positives:** There's a chance the Pap test can suggest abnormal cell changes, even when there are none.
- **Over detection:** Pap tests can find changes that might go away on their own. Following-up on these changes may mean extra tests are needed.
- **False negatives (missed cancers):** There's a chance the Pap test can miss abnormal cell changes, even when they're present.

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 Pap test

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

### If you need a healthcare provider:

- Visit [albertafindadoctor.ca](http://albertafindadoctor.ca)
- Call Health Link at 8-1-1
- Visit [search.cpsa.ca](http://search.cpsa.ca)  
(College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta)

### For more information:



#### Screening Programs

Tel: 1-866-727-3926

Fax: 1-888-944-3388

Web: [screeningforlife.ca](http://screeningforlife.ca)

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