

## A WOMEN'S INSTINCT IS INCREDIBLE “SCREEN YOURSELF FOR A BETTER TOMORROW”

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**Abstract:** Cervical screening is the process of detecting and removing abnormal tissue or cells in the cervix before cervical cancer develops. By aiming to detect and treat cervical neoplasia early on, cervical screening aims at secondary prevention of cervical cancer. The incidence of cervical cancer in areas where more than 20% of U.S. residents live under the poverty line is 18% to 39% higher than areas where less than 10% of residents live below the poverty line. Over the last 30 years, routine cervical cytology screening has contributed to a 50% reduction in the incidence of cervical cancer in the United States. Mortality from cervical cancer has also decreased from 5.55 per 100,000 women in 1975 to 2.38 per 100,000 women in 2008. Cervical cancer is very rare among screened women less than 10 per 100,000 annually. In 2010, representatives from 22 organizations formed a committee on Practice Improvement in Cervical Screening and Management (PICSM) that reviewed available evidence on cytologic abnormalities in adolescents and found that unnecessary treatment of precancerous cervical lesions can lead to cervical stenosis, preterm delivery, and preterm premature rupture of membrane.

**Key words:** Cervical screening, cervical cancer

### Introduction

Cervical cancer is the term used to describe tumors that can grow at the lower end of the womb. These tumors usually develop from abnormal cell changes at the entrance to the womb from the vagina (the opening of the cervix). Abnormal cell changes can be detected through screening and then removed. A vaccine against viruses that cause cancer (HPV vaccine) can reduce the risk of cervical cancer. There are more than 100 different types of HPV, many of which are harmless. However, some types of HPV can cause abnormal changes to the cells of the cervix, which can eventually lead to cervical cancer. Two strains of the HPV virus (HPV 16 and HPV 18) are known to be responsible for 70% of all cases of cervical cancer. These types of HPV infection don't have any symptoms, so many women won't realise they have the infection. Since 2008, a HPV vaccine has been routinely offered to girls aged 12 and 13.

**Cervical cancer:** Cervical cancer affects the cervix, the narrow portion of the lower part of the uterus, where it joins the top end of the vagina. It has a conical or cylindrical shape, and it protrudes through the end of the vagina.

**Causes:** Maximum all cervical cancer cases occur in women who have been previously infected with HPV and HPV is a group of viruses.

**Signs & symptoms:** Any of the following may be signs or symptoms of cancer:

- Blood spots or light bleeding between or following periods
- Menstrual bleeding that is longer and heavier than usual
- Bleeding after intercourse, douching, or a pelvic examination
- Increased vaginal discharge
- Pain during sexual intercourse
- Bleeding after menopause
- Unexplained, persistent pelvic and/or back pain

**HPV:** HPV stands for **human papillomavirus**. It's the most common sexually transmitted infection. HPV is usually harmless and goes away by itself, but some types can lead to cancer or genital warts. OR- Human papilloma virus (HPV) is the name for a group of viruses that affect your skin and the moist membranes lining your body.

Examples of this include your:

- cervix
- anus
- mouth and throat

There are more than 100 types of HPV. Around 40 types of HPV infection can affect the genital area.

Genital HPV infections are common and highly contagious. They're spread during sexual intercourse and skin-to-skin contact of the genital areas.

## What HPV infection does:

Infection with some types of genital HPV can cause:

- **Genital Warts** – the most common viral sexually transmitted infection (STI) in England
- abnormal tissue growth and other changes to cells within your cervix – this can sometimes lead to cervical cancer
- Girls aged 12 to 13 are offered a vaccination against HPV to help protect them against types of HPV that can cause cervical cancer.
- Women aged 25 to 64 are offered cervical screening to check for abnormal cells in the cervix.

**Screening:** Cervical screening tests help prevent cervical cancer by checking the health of the entrance of the womb (cervix) and detecting **abnormal** cells.

## Pap smear test:

A Pap smear (or Pap test) is a quick, painless procedure that screens for cervical cancer. It involves examining cells taken from the cervix under a microscope. The test doesn't diagnose cancer, but rather looks for abnormal cervical changes (cervical dysplasia)—precancerous or cancerous cells that could indicate cancer. If any changes are present, further testing is needed, such as a colposcopy or biopsy, will be done in order to diagnose cancer.

The test is named after George Papanicolaou, the Greek doctor who invented the procedure in the early 1940s.



## Who should have cervical screening tests

Women: aged 25 to 49 – every 3 years. Aged 50 to 64 – every 5 years.

Although these recommendations refer to all women, there are some risk factors for cervical cancer that may make it prudent to have more frequent Pap smears. These include:

- Having a family history of cervical cancer
- A diagnosis of cervical cancer or a Pap smear that showed precancerous cells
- Infection by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)
- Weakened immune system due to many factors, such as organ transplant, chemotherapy, or corticosteroids
- Early onset of sexual activity (intercourse)
- Multiple sexual partners
- A sexually transmitted infection, such as genital herpes or chlamydia
- Previous cancer of the genital tract
- Smoking
- Exposure to diethylstilbestrol (DES) before birth: DES is a drug that was often used to prevent miscarriage until research showed that women born to mothers who took DES were at an increased risk of cancer

Women who have had a hysterectomy (removal of the uterus) need to check with their doctor or smear taker whether they still need to have cervical smear tests.

## How often do women need a cervical screening tests

- Women are advised to have a cervical smear test every three years.

- Cervical cancer usually takes many years to develop. Any abnormal cells can be found and treated to stop them from becoming cancer.
- If it is first cervical smear test, or not had a test for over five years, It will be advised to have a second test in a year's time.
- In some circumstances, It may be advised to have a test more often, eg, after an abnormal result.

## Pre test preparation:

The timing of a Pap smear is important and best time is 5 days before and one to two weeks after menstruation . due to period, the blood and other tissue can interfere with the results of the test. Besides menstrual blood and tissue, there a number of other things that can interfere with the accuracy of a Pap test by masking abnormal cells. These are:

- ❖ **Sexual intercourse:** Do not have sex during the 48 hours prior to appointment.
- ❖ **Spermicides (foams, jellies, or other birth control products):**No sex even also with spermicides also so for 48 hours before Pap smear.
- ❖ **Vaginal lubricants:** Do not use a lubricant for at least 48 hours before having a Pap smear.
- ❖ **Tampons:** Do not insert a tampon for 48 hours before Papsmeat .
- ❖ **Vaginal douches:** Should stop three days before Pap smear.

## Procedure:

Woman lie on her back on the edge of the examination table, with her legs spread apart in the foot holds. This allows the medical practitioner to access the opening to the vagina, which is needed to conduct the test.



A speculum is then inserted into the vagina, which opens up the walls of the vagina and provides access to the cervix, where the cell sample needs to be taken.

The medical practitioner commonly uses a spatula to scrape a sample of cells from the outer opening of the cervix wall. Then an end cervical brush is used along the central opening of the cervix to collect cells from this area as well.

When the cell sample has been gathered, the speculum can then be removed and the procedure is finished. The same is then sent away to a laboratory to be tested for abnormalities and a follow up appointment is often scheduled to discuss the results

## RESULTS:

When the cells have been analyzed, the results usually come back as normal, unclear or abnormal.

Normal means that there were no changes evident on the cell sample, in which case the woman should simply return for a Pap smear test in two years to test for further changes.

If results are unclear, further tests to determine the HPV status may be required.

An abnormal result indicates that there were some changes evident in the cell sample. These changes are likely to be caused by HPV of varying severity, some of which may return to normal without treatment or they may progress to cancer.

## Conclusion:

A Pap smear test is very important to screen for abnormalities of cells in the cervix. Done regularly, it can help to recognize changes earlier and allows many women to seek treatment and avoid the progression to cervical cancer. Although the procedure of the test is quick, many women feel uncomfortable about the process and it is often helpful to explain what is involved in the test before the test begins. To minimize unnecessary surveillance and invasive workups for women with a low risk of cervical cancer, evidence for the use of novel biomarkers better able to detect high-grade dysplasias should be carefully considered.

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