

## About hpv & cervical cancer

Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) can cause cervical cancers. HPV is transmitted by sexual contact, not just sexual intercourse. HPV is very common in adults, and will usually go away on its own without any problem. For some women, HPV will not go away, and over time this can cause abnormal cells in the cervix that can change to cancer. HPV vaccines are now available to women to prevent most but not all, cervical cancers. Regular pap tests are the best protection against cervical cancer, even after vaccination.

To learn more see our brochure "hpv & cervical cancer- what you should know and do".



## Did you know?

- Regular screening can reduce the risk for developing cervical cancer by 70%.
- All women who have ever had sex should be regularly screened once a year for the first 3 years, then every 2 years until age 69.
- Cervical screening is free of charge and is offered by family doctors and other clinics throughout the province. Call your doctor or health care provider to make an appointment.

# cervical cancer

Protect yourself  
with regular  
pap tests

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The BC Cancer Agency is committed to reducing the incidence of cancer, reducing the mortality from cancer, and improving the quality of life of those living with cancer. It provides a comprehensive cancer control program for the people of B.C. by working with community partners to deliver a range of oncology services, including prevention, early detection, diagnosis and treatment, research, education, supportive care, rehabilitation and palliative care.

The BC Cancer Foundation is an independent charitable organization that supports research and care at the BC Cancer Agency. You can help support cancer research by donating to the BC Cancer Foundation at 604.877.6040 or toll free 1.888.906.CURE (2873) or visit their website at: [www.bccancerfoundation.com](http://www.bccancerfoundation.com)



**BC Cancer Agency**  
CARE & RESEARCH

**CERVICAL CANCER  
SCREENING PROGRAM**



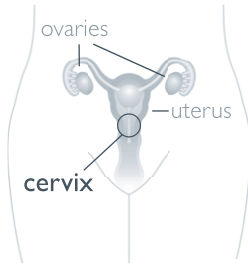
BC Centre for Disease Control





## What is the cervix?

The cervix is the part of the uterus (or womb) that opens into the vagina.



## Why get screened?

Regular screening helps to prevent cervical cancer. Sometimes the cells of the cervix become abnormal. Over time, these cells can change to cervical cancer. Screening helps to find these abnormal cells early when they can be easily removed.

## How does screening work?

Cervical screening is currently done using the Pap test. To do a Pap test, your doctor or health care provider will gently collect a sample of cells from your cervix using a small spatula or a brush. The sample will be sent to the laboratory where they will use a microscope to look for any abnormal cells.

## Who should be screened?

All women who have ever had sex should be regularly screened.

## How often should I be screened?

At first, you should be screened once a year for three years. If these results are normal, you can then be tested every two years. Screening may

be stopped after age 69 if you have had normal results for the past 10 years and no abnormal results before that. Ask your doctor or health care provider about what would be best for you.

## Where do I go for screening?

Cervical screening (pap test) is free of charge and is offered by family doctors and other clinics throughout the province. Call your doctor or health care provider to make an appointment. Screening should not be done during your period. Douching or using treatments, lubricants or foam inside your vagina should be avoided for 48 hours prior to your appointment.

## What happens after screening?

Within 6 to 8 weeks of your screening, a report will be sent to your doctor or health care provider who will then contact you only if any abnormal cells are found. Several results are possible:

### Normal

Most women will have a normal result. In this case, continue with your regular screening.

### Mild atypia

This means that mildly abnormal cervical cells have been found on your Pap test. The mildly abnormal cells usually return to normal with time but another Pap test should be done in 6 months

to follow up. If the mild atypia does not go away within 2 years, you will be referred to a specialist for a closer examination of your cervix.

### Moderate or severe atypia

This means that the abnormal cervical cells show moderate or more severe changes. Only a small number of women with this finding will actually have cancer. If you have moderate or severe atypia, you will be referred to a specialist for a closer examination of your cervix.

## Is cervical screening (pap test) reliable?

No screening test is perfect but cervical screening will find most cases of cervical cancer. Regular screening offers the best protection against cervical cancer.

If you have any abnormal bleeding or spotting, contact your doctor or health care provider immediately, even if your most recent Pap test was normal.

