

## Cervix Self-Screening

The power to screen is in your hands.

**Nearly all cervical cancers are caused by HPV. The good news is cervical cancer is almost entirely preventable.**

### What is human papillomavirus (HPV)?

HPV is a common virus that spreads through sexual contact. This includes intimate touching, oral, vaginal and anal sex.

Most people will have an HPV infection at some point in their life and never know it. There are usually no symptoms. The majority of HPV infections don't cause any problems and are cleared by your body within 2 years.

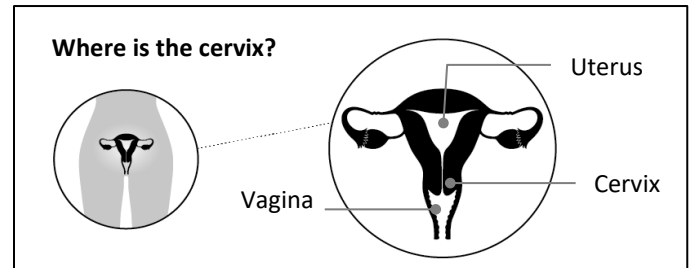
But sometimes, certain HPV types don't clear on their own and can cause cells on your cervix to become abnormal. These abnormal cells may become cancer cells over time.

### Why is cervix screening important?

The cell changes that lead to cervical cancer can happen without you knowing.

Screening can help:

- Find out if you're at risk for developing abnormal cells. Finding and treating abnormal cells early can help prevent cancer.
- Find cancer at an early stage when there are more treatment options.



**Play an active role in your health. Cervix self-screening makes it possible to screen for cervical cancer yourself, anywhere you feel safe and comfortable.**

Cervix self-screening involves testing for HPV. HPV testing looks for the virus that causes cervical cancer. It can find people who are more likely to develop abnormal cell changes caused by HPV.

### Who should get cervix self-screening?

Anyone with a cervix, including women and Two-Spirit, transgender and gender-diverse people, between the ages of 25 and 69 should screen regularly for cervical cancer. You can stop cervix screening at age 69 if you've always had normal Pap tests. Talk to a health care provider if you've had treatment for pre-cancer cells in the past.

You should screen regularly if:

- You've had the HPV vaccine.
- You've ever had any sexual contact with another person of any gender; and/or
- You've been through menopause.

Do not complete cervix self-screening if:

- You have any symptoms, like bleeding between periods.
- You're pregnant or using a pessary. See a health care provider to discuss cervix screening options and when to screen.
- You do not have a cervix (e.g. total hysterectomy). Talk to a health care provider to see if cervix screening is still required.

### Why should I consider self-screening?

- It tests for HPV, the virus that causes the changes to the cells of the cervix that lead to cervical cancer.
- You don't need to see a health care provider or have a speculum (pelvic) exam.
- You can do it yourself within the privacy of your home or, if you prefer, at a health care provider's office.
- It's easy and painless: you use a small, Q-tip like swab to collect a sample from your vagina.
- It's free of charge.
- HPV testing is very accurate. Because it's so accurate, if your test shows you don't have HPV, you can wait 5 years for your next screen.

### Will I do it correctly? Will it hurt?

The test is easy and shouldn't hurt. You collect a sample by turning a small swab inside your vagina; it doesn't have to go in too far. If you follow the instructions inside your kit, you're doing it correctly. The sample you collect is just as accurate as a provider-taken sample.

### What will my results mean?

- **If no HPV is found in your sample:** You don't need to screen again for another 5 years. It's highly unlikely that you'll have abnormal cells on your cervix.
- **If HPV is found in your sample:** Based on your result, you may need a Pap test or colposcopy (a procedure that looks at the cervix more closely).

| <b>How Cervical Cancer Develops:</b>  |   |
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| Not all HPV infections cause cancer. If cervical cancer is going to develop, it usually takes 15 to 20 years. Most infections will go away on their own without causing any problems.   |   |
| <b>HPV Test: Looks for an HPV infection</b>   | <b>Pap Test: Looks for abnormal cell changes and/or HPV</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cervix self-screening uses HPV testing to look for HPV in your vagina.</li><li>• HPV testing does not need a sample from your cervix.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A Pap test is when a health care provider collects cells from your cervix.</li><li>• They are checked for any cell changes and/or HPV. What gets tested will depend on your age and health history.</li></ul> |

### Should I get the HPV vaccine?

Generally, anyone aged 9 and older should get the vaccine. The vaccine is very effective at protecting against HPV types that cause most cervical cancers. Learn more: [immunizebc.ca/hpv](http://immunizebc.ca/hpv).

| <b>How to get screened</b>  |
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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <b>Get a self-screening kit.</b> If you are eligible, order a kit online (<a href="http://screeningbc.ca/cervix">screeningbc.ca/cervix</a>) or by phone (1-877-702-6566). The kit will arrive by mail in a plain, unmarked package.</li><li>2. <b>Complete the test.</b> Closely follow the instructions in the kit. The test is painless and very easy to do. You can also ask a health care provider to explain or show you how to take the sample or they can take the sample for you.</li><li>3. <b>Return the kit for testing.</b> Drop off your completed kit at your nearest post box on the same day you collect your sample. We will mail your results 4 to 6 weeks after returning your kit. You can also see your results online: <a href="http://healthgateway.gov.bc.ca">healthgateway.gov.bc.ca</a>.</li></ol> <p>If you don't want to complete self-screening or have any symptoms, please schedule a Pap test with a health care provider. Visit <a href="http://screeningbc.ca/cervix">screeningbc.ca/cervix</a> to find a clinic near you.</p> |

| <b>Things to consider:</b>   |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ If you have bleeding after sex, between periods or after menopause; increased vaginal discharge; pelvic pain or pain during sex, do not complete self-screening. Talk to a health care provider. It's important to look into these symptoms - even if your screening results are normal.</li><li>○ A HPV result might cause some anxiety. This result doesn't mean you have or will develop cervical cancer. Most people will clear an HPV infection, and not everyone with an HPV infection will develop cancer.</li><li>○ Screening may lead to unnecessary stress, treatment, or have potential long-term impacts on future pregnancy (pre-term birth or low birth weight).</li><li>○ No screening test is perfect. Your result could say no HPV is found in your sample even if you have pre-cancerous cells or cervical cancer. Or it might show HPV, even if your cervix cells are normal.</li></ul> |

### Contact Us

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