

# CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING

A Pap test is a simple screening test that can help detect abnormal cell changes in the cervix and prevent cervical cancer.



## Get Tested

**A Pap test is recommended every three years for:**

- women 21 years of age and older who are or have been sexually active

**You should still get a Pap test to check your cervix, if you:**

- feel healthy & have no symptoms
- are no longer sexually active
- have only had one sexual partner
- are in a same-sex relationship
- have been through menopause
- have received the HPV vaccine
- have no family history of cervical cancer

**Women 70 years old and older** can stop having Pap tests if they have had three or more normal Pap tests in the past 10 years.

**Women who have had a hysterectomy** (an operation to remove part or all of the uterus) should talk to their doctor or nurse practitioner to see if they should continue getting Pap tests.

## Cervical Cancer

Cervical cancer is an abnormal growth of cells that starts in the cervix. The cervix is the lower part of the uterus that connects to the vagina.

## Causes

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the leading cause of cervical cancer. HPV infections cause changes to cells in the cervix that may turn into cancer when left untreated.

HPV infection is very common among men and women who are sexually active and often has no signs or symptoms.

## Prevention

You can reduce your risk for cervical cancer by having regular Pap tests and getting the HPV vaccine. Getting tested every 3 years will help ensure that any changes in your cervix are caught early, when treatment is more likely to be successful.

for more info on HPV



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## Pap Test Procedure

The following will happen during your pap test appointment:

- while you lie on an exam table, your healthcare provider will insert an instrument called a speculum into your vagina, opening it to see the cervix
- a swab will be used to gently take a few cells from inside and around the cervix
- the sample will be sent to a lab and examined under a microscope

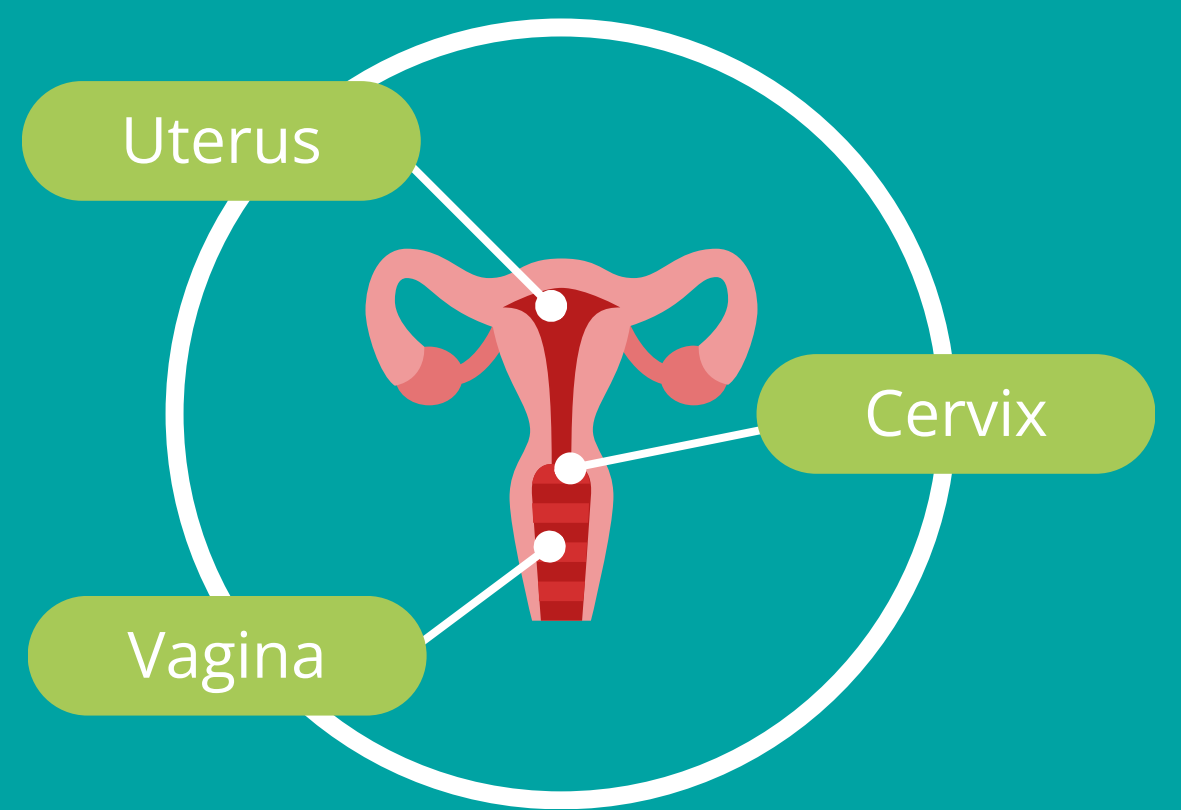
## Results

Both you and your healthcare provider will receive the results of your Pap test.

If your test is normal, you will receive a reminder from the Ontario Cervical Screening Program when you are due for your next screening test, usually in 3 years.

If your test result is abnormal, your healthcare provider will arrange for you to have more tests.

The majority of women who require additional testing will not have cervical cancer.



## Symptoms of Cervical Cancer

Cervical cancer may not cause any signs or symptoms in its early stages. Symptoms often appear in later stages, when the tumor has spread.

Other conditions can also cause similar symptoms.

Talk to your healthcare provider if you experience any of the following:

- abnormal vaginal bleeding, including between periods, after menopause, and after sex
- abnormal vaginal discharge
- difficulty urinating or having a bowel movement
- pain during sexual intercourse
- pain in the pelvic area or lower back that may go down one leg
- leg swelling, often in one leg
- unexplained weight loss, loss of appetite or fatigue

Cervical cancer is easier to treat in its early stages. Getting screened regularly is key.

