

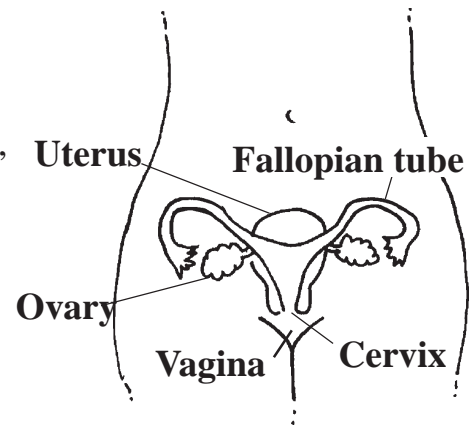
About Your Pap Smear



IH-IV-173
W.D. 2/05
Pg. 1 of 2

What is a Pap smear?

A Pap smear is a test that checks cells from your cervix to see if there are any changes that may turn into cancer. If any changes are found, you can be treated. Most times, the treatment keeps the changes from turning into cancer. A Pap smear is the best way to check for, and keep from getting cancer of the cervix. This test does not check for cancer of the uterus, fallopian tubes or ovaries.



The test can also check for some types of infections of the cervix, such as viral infections (genital warts and herpes) and vaginal infections (yeast or trichomonas).

How is the Pap smear done?

While doing your pelvic exam, your health care provider will use a special swab or brush to gently scrape off some cells from the opening of your cervix. These cells will be sent to a lab where they will be checked under a microscope.



How often should I have a Pap smear?

- You should have a Pap smear every year if:
 - You are 18 years old or older, **or**
 - You are having sex, **or**
 - You have a high risk for cancer of the cervix. You have a high risk if:
 - › You started having sex at a very young age.
 - › You have sex with a lot of different partners.
 - › You smoke.
 - › You have an HPV (human papillomavirus) infection (genital warts).
 - › You have HIV (AIDS).



- If your Pap smears have been normal for 3 years, and you are not at high risk for cancer of the cervix, your health care provider may want you to have a Pap smear only every 2 - 3 years.

(over)

- If your Pap smear is not normal (abnormal) or you have a high risk for cancer of the cervix, you may need to have a Pap smear done more often than every year.
- If you are 70 years old or older, and you have been having normal Pap smears, you may not need to have any more Pap smears done.

Can I have a Pap smear if I am pregnant?

Yes, it is safe to have a Pap smear done while you are pregnant.

If you have an abnormal Pap smear this is not a danger to your baby when it is born .



How should I get ready for my Pap smear?

- The best time to have a Pap smear is before or after your menstrual period.
- It is best if you don't have sex for 2 days before your Pap smear.
- For 3 days before your Pap smear, don't douche or put any creams or medicines in your vagina.



How will I feel during the Pap smear?

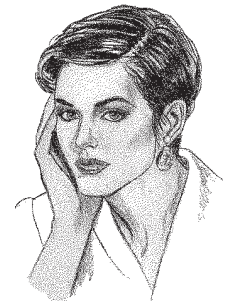
You may feel a little uncomfortable when your health care provider puts in the speculum, which is a plastic or metal tool to hold open the walls of your vagina, so your health care provider can see your cervix. You may have a feeling of pressure or pulling as the cells are being scraped off your cervix. If you can relax, you will be more comfortable. To relax, try breathing slowly and deeply, and don't tighten up your muscles.

What happens after the Pap smear?

You may have a few spots of blood from your vagina for 2 - 3 days after your Pap smear. If you have a lot of bleeding, or it doesn't stop in a few days, tell your health care provider.

What if my Pap smear is not normal?

Depending on what the problem is, you may need treatment, or you may not. Most of the time, an abnormal Pap smear does not mean cancer. If you have an abnormal Pap smear this is not a danger to your baby when it is born .



Your health care provider may want you to have another Pap smear soon to keep a close check on the changes in the cells of your cervix.