

# Cervical Screening Test - doctor/nurse or self-collected

The cervical screening test looks for the cause of most cervical cancer: a common infection called human papilloma virus (HPV). The cervical screening test replaced the Pap smear in late 2017.

## Who should have the Cervical Screening Test?

Everyone with a cervix aged 25-74 who has ever been sexually active should have a cervical screening test at least every five years.

Your first cervical screening test is due at aged 25, or two years after your last Pap smear.

If you are having symptoms such as bleeding after sex or bleeding in between periods or any bleeding after menopause, make an appointment with a doctor to have your symptoms investigated. Don't wait until your next cervical screening test.

## How is a CST carried out?

Most people can choose from one of two options for their cervical screening test:

### 1. A trained doctor or nurse can collect a sample from your cervix.

- They will ask you to lie down on your back on a clinic bed and give you a cover to put over you.
- The doctor or nurse will gently insert a duck-billed device called a speculum into your vagina to hold it open. They then take a sample from your cervix using a soft brush. This might feel a little strange or uncomfortable but it shouldn't hurt.

**2. From July 2022 most people can also choose to self-collect their own vaginal sample.** The self-collected test is simple, quick and safe. It is also as accurate at detecting human HPV as the test performed by a doctor or nurse.

- The self-collected test uses a specially designed swab that looks a bit like a cotton wool bud to collect cells from the vagina.
- You simply insert the swab into your vagina and gently rotate it for 20-30 seconds.
- The self-collection is normally performed in a clinic setting, behind a private screen or in the bathroom. But you can also take the swabs away and collect the sample in your own home.
- Self-collection isn't suitable for everyone; please speak to your doctor or nurse to understand if it's a good option for you.

## What is Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)?

HPV is a common infection easily passed on through sexual activity. Most HPV infections are usually naturally cleared by the body's immune system over a period of 1 to 3 years without causing any problems. If the body does not clear the virus, cervical cells can change and this may lead to cervical cancer. This usually takes over 10 years.

Vaccination to help protect against several strains of HPV was introduced into Australian vaccination programs in 2007. This has significantly lowered the rate of problems caused by HPV. However, because the HPV vaccine does not protect against all types of HPV that can cause cervical cancer it is important to continue regular screening even if you have received a full course of the vaccine.

Whilst HPV is an infection, it is not something that needs treating with antibiotics and any sexual partners do not need testing or treating.

## Cervical Screening Results

What happens next depends on your cervical screening test result, which will be one of the following:

### Normal

If your CST is normal, we will let you know and schedule a reminder for you to return to routine screening in 5 years. You will also get a letter a few months before your next test is due from the National Cancer Screening Register (just remember to keep your address up-to-date with Medicare).

### Return for clinician collected test within 6 weeks

If you self-collected your sample and HPV was detected, you will need to return for a doctor or nurse collected cervical screening test within 6 weeks so an additional test can be carried out.

### Repeat test in 12 months

If you have been advised to repeat your doctor or nurse-collected cervical screening test in 12 months, this is because HPV was detected on your test.

Additional tests will have automatically been done on your sample at the laboratory to check on the cells of your cervix. This testing indicates that you are not at higher risk of having a serious abnormality and that you can safely wait to repeat your test in 12 months.

When your cervical screening test is repeated in 12 months, HPV may no longer be present and you can safely move to having 5 yearly screening.

Alternatively if HPV is still present, you will need another test in 12 months or further testing.

### Referral for colposcopy

Sometimes your result may indicate that you should be referred for colposcopy. This does not mean you have cervical cancer. It means that either:

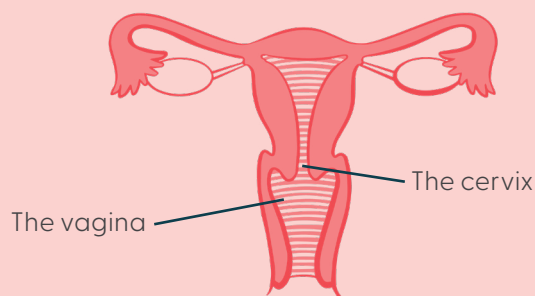
- A type of HPV was found that needs further investigation

or

- the test found changing cells that may need treatment

If you need a colposcopy then we will refer you to a gynaecologist. A colposcopy is a procedure that feels like having a Cervical Screening Test and involves a doctor looking at the cells of the cervix more closely under magnification. It is very important to attend your appointments for further investigation.

## Female Reproductive System



## Book your cervical screening test today

You can book your cervical screening test by phoning your nearest Family Planning Tasmania clinic or by booking online.

**Glenorchy: 6273 9117**

**Launceston: 6343 4566**

**Burnie: 6431 7692**

You can book online by visiting our website [fpt.org.au](http://fpt.org.au) or by using this QR code:



**fpt.org.au**