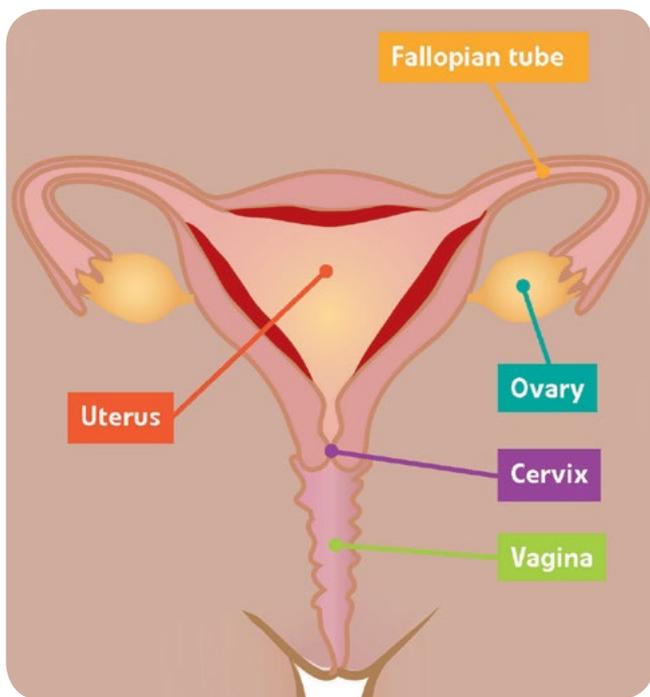


Factsheet: **Cervical Screening Test**

Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable cancers. Having a Cervical Screening Test every **5 years** protects against developing cervical cancer.

Over 99% of cervical cancer is caused by certain types of the human papillomavirus (HPV). The Cervical Screening Test detects cancer-causing HPV in the cervix and enables treatment of any abnormal cell changes before they develop into cervical cancer. The Cervical Screening Test is more accurate and reliable than the Pap test.



The cervix is inside the body where the top of the vagina and the base of the uterus meet.

Who should have the Cervical Screening Test?

Women, and people with a cervix, aged between 25 and 74 who have ever been sexually active should have the test.

Even if you've only had one sexual partner, you still need to have regular Cervical Screening Tests.

You should have a Cervical Screening Test every 5 years even if you are no longer having sex.

Anyone with a cervix that has ever been sexually active needs to have regular Cervical Screening Tests including lesbians, intersex people who have a cervix, and transgender people with a cervix. Find more information and support at [The Inner Circle](#).

Worried you won't remember when to have the test? The [National Cervical Screening Register](#) will send you a letter when your next Cervical Screening Test is due.

Sexual activity is any sexual contact with a partner involving:

- sexual touching of genitals (penis or vagina) and/or anus using hands, body or mouth
- oral sex (mouth, genital or anal contact)
- anal sex (with a penis or sharing sex toys)
- vaginal sex (with a penis or sharing sex toys)

What if I've been vaccinated against HPV?

In Australia, we have a successful [National HPV Vaccination Program](#) for young girls and boys. This prevents infection with the types of HPV which are most commonly linked with cervical cancer.

Even if you've had the HPV vaccination (known as Gardasil), it's important to still have regular Cervical Screening Tests. While the [HPV vaccine](#) protects against the main high-risk types of HPV, not all cancer-causing types are covered.

When should I have the Cervical Screening Test?

- You should have the test every 5 years from age 25-74 years.
- If you are under 25, you should have your first test when you turn 25.

NOTE: If you have any unusual vaginal bleeding (such as bleeding after sex, between your periods or after menopause), discharge or pain during sex, make an appointment to see your doctor even if you have had a recent Cervical Screening Test.

How is the Cervical Screening Test done?

The Cervical Screening Test is quick and simple and only takes a few minutes. It can be done in a clinic or consulting room by your doctor or nurse. If you have ever had a Pap test, the Cervical Screening Test is done in the same way.

1. Your doctor or nurse will take you to a private room and explain to you what the test involves. When you're ready, they will ask you to remove your clothes from the waist down and lie down on the examination bed. They usually provide you with a sheet to cover yourself with.
2. You will lie on the bed with your knees bent and slightly apart, and your feet on the bed. When you're comfortable, the doctor or nurse will gently insert a speculum into your vagina to help see the cervix. They will then collect a small sample of cells from the cervix using a soft brush.

The test should not hurt at all, but you may feel a bit of discomfort. Let your doctor or nurse know if you feel any pain.

3. Once the test is complete, your doctor or nurse will let you get dressed in private.
4. Your sample of cells will be sent to a laboratory to be tested. Your doctor or nurse will explain how you will get your results.
5. If HPV is not found in your cells, you won't need another Cervical Screening Test for 5 years. If HPV is found, your doctor will let you know what happens next.

You can ask to have the Cervical Screening Test done by a female doctor or nurse if you want to. You can also bring someone with you to your appointment to make you feel more comfortable.

Remember:

- Health professionals are non-judgemental and confidential
- The test may be uncomfortable, but should not be painful
- The test could save your life
- Even if you've had the HPV vaccine, you still need a Cervical Screening Test every 5 years

What does a positive test result mean?

Sometimes a test will be positive. If your result is positive this means that you have a HPV infection. This does not mean you have cervical cancer, it means you may be at risk of cervical cancer in the future. Your doctor or nurse will talk with you about what happens next.

This may include:

- Having a repeat test in 12 months, to see if the HPV infection has been cleared by your body. If the infection has cleared, you are safe to have your next Cervical Screening Test in 5 years. If the HPV infection is still there, you may need to have further tests done by a specialist.
- Seeing a specialist – if you have a particular type of HPV infection that needs to be checked more closely or some cell changes that need treatment, you will be referred to a specialist (usually a gynaecologist).

How much will a Cervical Screening Test cost?

Many health services 'bulk bill' and provide the Cervical Screening Test at no charge to you – the cost is covered by Medicare. However, some health services are not a bulk billing service and may charge a fee. This means you may need to pay the full fee and then claim some of the cost back from Medicare.

It's important to ask if there are any costs, and what they will be, when you make your appointment.

Health services that provide the Cervical Screening Test include:

- Local doctor or general practice (GP)
- [Family Planning NSW clinic](#)
- Women's health centre or community health centre
- Sexual health clinics
- Aboriginal medical services
- Specialist (Gynaecologist)

For more information

- [National Cervical Screening Program](#)
- Contact the Family Planning NSW Talkline on 1300 658 886 or go to www.fpnsw.org.au/talkline
- National Relay Service (for people who are deaf, and hearing or speech impaired) 133 677
- TIS National's immediate interpreting service - 131 450

Or visit your nearest Family Planning NSW clinic or local General Practice (GP)