

Factsheet: Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Cervical Screening Test?

The Cervical Screening Test has replaced the Pap test. The Cervical Screening Test checks for human papillomavirus (HPV), the virus which can cause abnormal changes in the cells of the cervix. If left untreated these cell changes can eventually cause cervical cancer.

What is the difference between the Cervical Screening Test and the Pap test?

The Cervical Screening Test looks for the presence of HPV while the Pap test only looked for abnormal cell changes in the cervix. The Cervical Screening Test detects cancer causing HPV, and then if HPV is found, the test checks for any cell changes to see if they need to be treated.

Is it safe to have the test done only every 5 years now?

Yes, the Cervical Screening Test is more accurate and reliable than the Pap test. The Cervical Screening Test looks for HPV infections that can lead to cell changes that can eventually become cancer. It can take 10 to 15 years for an HPV infection to develop into cervical cancer. If your Cervical Screening Test comes back negative for HPV, it is safe to wait another 5 years before your next test.

I haven't had sex in a long time; do I still need to get tested?

Yes, cervical cancer can take 10-15 years to develop from an HPV infection. Even if you are no longer having sex, you still need to have a Cervical Screening Test every 5 years.

My partner and I only have sex with each other; do I need to get tested?

Yes. If you're in a monogamous relationship and have ever had sex you are still at risk of HPV and cervical cancer and should have regular Cervical Screening Tests.

Can I have the test done when I have my period?

The best time to book your Cervical Screening Test is between menstrual periods, or anytime you are not bleeding.

Can I have the test when pregnant?

Yes, the Cervical Screening Test is safe to have during pregnancy. You should let your doctor or nurse know that you are pregnant as they will use a special brush to collect the cells from the cervix. If you prefer not to have the test done while pregnant, you can ask to have the test done at your six-week check-up after giving birth.

What if my test results are positive for HPV?

If your test results are positive for HPV the laboratory will automatically carry out a second test on the same sample of cells to look for any changes in the cells of the cervix. Your doctor or nurse will talk to you about what happens next. Some people may need to have another Cervical Screening Test in 12 months' time, and others may be referred to a specialist for additional tests. Often your body will clear a HPV infection naturally in one or two years.

Can LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, intersex and queer) people also get HPV?

Yes, anyone who has had any type of sexual activity with another person can get HPV. All people with a cervix should have a Cervical Screening Test every 5 years.

Do I need to have the test if I've had a hysterectomy?

Your doctor will be able to best advise you if you still need to have Cervical Screening Tests after a hysterectomy. Generally, if your cervix was removed, you don't need a Cervical Screening Test. You may still need a Cervical Screening Test if you've had a partial hysterectomy.

Can girls who've had sex from a young age get tested?

If you became sexually active before the age of 14 and before having the HPV vaccination talk to your doctor about whether to have a Cervical Screening Test before the age of 25.

I've had the HPV vaccine, so do I need to have a Cervical Screening Test?

Yes, the HPV vaccine (known as Gardasil) reduces your risk of developing cervical cancer. It protects you against the most common types of HPV that cause the majority of cervical cancers but does not protect against all of them. If you've had the HPV vaccination, it's important to still have a Cervical Screening Test every 5 years.

What is the National Cervical Screening Register?

The National Cervical Screening Register (NCSR) is a secure and confidential database that records cervical screening information for everyone who participates in the program. The NCSR invites eligible people to have their first Cervical Screening Test when they turn 25. It also sends reminders when you are due for your next test, and prompts participants to have further testing if they have abnormal results. Find more information on the [NCSR website](#).

Have more questions?

- [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).