

I feel healthy, does it look like I have cancer?

You can look and feel perfectly healthy, and still have changes in your cervix. Having a Pap smear is the only way to find out.

I've been through menopause. Do I still need to have Pap smears?

Yes : The risk of getting cervical cancer increase with age. If you have ever had sex, even with only one partner, it is important to keep having Pap smears. A Pap smear every two years until you are 70 years old, even after menopause, is your best protection against cervical cancer.

I've had a hysterectomy (womb taken out). Do I still need a Pap smear ?

Usually, no. However, in some cases Pap smears may still be needed. If you have had a total hysterectomy; that is, your uterus and cervix removed, and have ever had treatment for severe changes on the cervix, it is recommended that you continue to have Pap smears taken from the upper vagina. If your hysterectomy was only partial, and your cervix was not removed, you will still need to have a Pap smear every two years. Check with our doctor to be absolutely sure.

Cervical Cancer Vaccine

A vaccine is now available that protects against the HPV virus. Ideally the vaccine should be given before first sexual contact and is recommended after the age of 9 years. In India the recommended maximum age is 26 years but worldwide, no age is a bar for the vaccine to be given.

The vaccine is given in the arm or thigh 3 times after which maximum protection is achieved. It is not yet known if boosters will be required later on.



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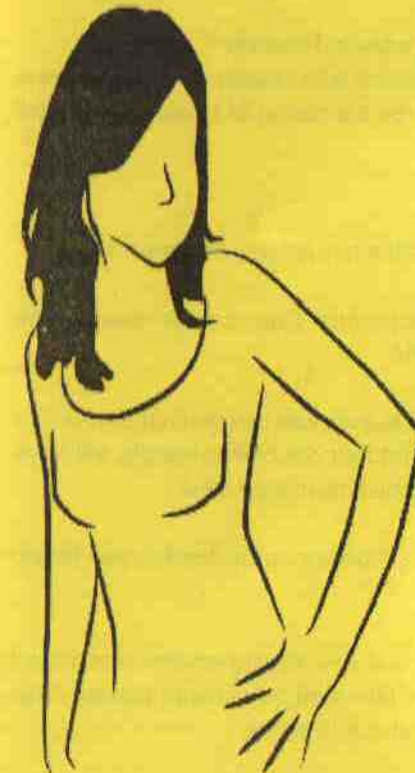
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Early Detection is the Best Protection



PAP SMEAR

All about Pap smear and cervical cancer

Don't make excuses,
make an appointment

What is a Pap smear ?

A Pap smear is quick and simple test in which a number of cells are collected from your cervix and sent to a laboratory where they are tested for changes. No drugs or anaesthetics are required and a doctor or women's health nurse can easily do it. It only takes a few minutes and is the best protection against cervical cancer.

What causes cervical cancer ?

Long term infection with certain types of a virus is now known to be the cause of almost all cervical cancers.

Key facts :

HPV is a virus (the human papilloma virus)

Almost all abnormal Pap smear results are caused by HPV.

Anyone who has ever had sex can have HPV - it's so common that four out of five people will have had HPV at some time in their lives.

In most cases, it clears up by itself in one to two years.

In rare cases, if the virus persists and is left undetected, it can lead to cervical cancer. This usually takes about 10 years.

A Pap smear every two years can detect any abnormal cell changes caused by HPV which can then be monitored and/or treated to prevent cancer.

While HPV is very common, most women with HPV will not develop cervical cancer.

Who is at risk of cervical cancer ?

All women with a cervix who have had sex are at risk of cervical cancer.

About half of the new cases of cervical cancer diagnosed each year are in women over 50 years of age. Women over the age of 50 years are less likely to have regular Pap smears. More of these women die from cervical cancer because their cancer is diagnosed at a later stage, when treatment is less effective. Having a regular Pap smear every two years will help prevent most of these cancers in older women.

What are the symptoms of cervical cancer ?

In the early stages of cervical cancer, there are usually no symptoms at all. The only way you will know is if you have a Pap smear.

What does a Pap Smear feel like ?

Sometimes having a Pap smear can be a little embarrassing. Remember, for the person taking your smear, this is just part of their everyday work. If the Pap smear feels uncomfortable or hurts, tell our doctors straightaway.

How effective are Pap smears ?

A Pap smear every two years can prevent the most common form of cervical cancer in up to 90% of cases and is your best protection against cervical cancer.

When should I start having Pap smears ?

All women who have ever been sexually active should start having Pap smears between the ages of 18 and 70 years, or one to two years after having first sexual intercourse whichever is later.

Why you need to have a Pap smear every two years

- because this can prevent the most common form of cervical cancer in up to 90% of cases.

The good news is that cervical cancer is one of the most preventable of all cancers

And having a Pap smear every two years offers the best chance of preventing cervical cancer.

The Pap smear is a screening test, not a diagnostic test. This means that women without any symptoms are tested at regular intervals (every two years) to check for changes in the cells of the cervix. If changes are found early, they can be monitored by more frequent Pap smears. If needed, changes can be further investigated (diagnosed) and treated well before cancer develops.

The biggest risk factor for cervical cancer is not having a Pap smear every two years.

Strong medical evidence that screening works!

The important thing about screening is to make it a regular part of your life and to continue to screen routinely until you are 70 years old.

Does an abnormal result mean that I have cancer ?

No! over 90% of Pap smears are normal. Only a small number show changes in the cells of the cervix. Most of these changes are due to HPV infections which usually clear up naturally without any need for treatment. In a small number of women, these changes may develop into a high grade abnormality and in an even smaller number, may progress to cervical cancer. When detected early by a Pap smear, these changes can be treated and cured.