



The Alberta First Nations  
Information Governance Centre

For more information, please  
contact the Alberta Cervical  
Cancer Screening Program

 1-866-727-3926

 [ScreeningForLife.ca/cervical](https://ScreeningForLife.ca/cervical)

# Cervical Screening

Do I really need a Pap test?

## Are there any risks to cervical screening?

An abnormal result can be very stressful. Pap tests can detect cell changes that can go away on their own. It is important to follow-up on these changes to avoid cervical cancer. Extra tests may be required. Talk to your healthcare provider about these risks.

## Where do I go for a Pap test?

Make an appointment with your healthcare provider or find a location near you at <https://screeningforlife.ca/where-to-get-screened/>



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First Nations information be protected  
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**Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable cancers. Have a Pap test at least once every 3 years until you're 70.**



## What is a Pap test?

A Pap test checks for changes in the cells of your cervix. It's done in a healthcare provider's office, only takes a few minutes, and can save your life. An instrument called a speculum is gently inserted into your vagina so the cervix can be seen. Cells are carefully collected from the cervix and sent to the laboratory to be checked under a microscope. If any cell changes are found, they should be followed closely. If needed, they can be treated so that cancer doesn't develop.

90% of Cervical Cancer can be prevented with regular Pap tests

## Should I have a Pap test?

- ✓ Regularly starting at age 25, or 3 years after becoming sexually active, whichever comes later.
- ✓ Being sexually active means having any skin-to-skin contact in the genital area.
- ✓ This includes touching, oral sex, or intercourse with a partner of any sex.
- ✓ Pap tests should be a regular part of your health care until you're at least 70.
- ✓ If you've had a hysterectomy, talk to your healthcare provider about whether you still need Pap tests.

## What is the link between HPV and cervical cancer?

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a group of viruses that affect different parts of the body.

- Almost all cervical cancer is caused by certain types of HPV.
- These types are called high-risk HPV.
- High-risk HPV is spread easily by sexual contact.
- HPV is a very common virus that affects women and men. Over 70% of people will get HPV at some time in their life.
- Most people with high-risk HPV never have symptoms.
- 90% of HPV infections in women clear up on their own.
- While HPV is very common, most women with HPV will NOT develop cervical cancer.

Pap tests check for cervical cell changes caused by HPV. Any changes can be followed closely to make sure they clear up. If needed, these abnormal cells can be treated so cervical cancer doesn't develop. In rare cases, if an HPV infection doesn't clear up after many years, it can lead to cervical cancer.