



Alberta First Nations
Information Governance Centre

Cervical Cancer Screening

Where do I go to screen for cervical cancer?

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

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

 1-866-727-3926

 ScreeningForLife.ca/cervical

What are the benefits of cervical cancer screening?

- Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable cancers.
- 90% of cervical cancer can be prevented with early diagnosis and treatment.
- Screening can find changes early so they can be followed or treated.
- Taking part in screening is a good way to care for your health and well-being.

Are there any risks to cervical cancer screening?

An abnormal result can be very stressful. Cervical cancer screening 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.



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What happens during cervical cancer screening?

Screening is done in a healthcare provider's office, takes only a few minutes, and can save your life. A healthcare provider will ask you to undress from the waist down in private and give you a sheet to cover yourself. As you lie on an exam table, the healthcare provider will put an instrument called a speculum into the vagina. This helps them see the cervix and take a sample of cells. The sample will be sent to the lab and checked for human papillomavirus (HPV) or any abnormal cells that may lead to cancer.

How is screening done?

There are 2 ways to screen for cervical cancer:

- A Pap test checks for changes in cells and is done between the ages of 25 and 49 every 3 years
- A cervical screening test checks directly for HPV and is done between the ages of 50 and 69 every 3 to 5 years, depending on your immune status.



Should I have cervical cancer screening?

- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Cervical screening should be a regular part of your health care until you're at least 70, even if you're no longer sexually active.
- ✓ Your healthcare provider will recommend how often and which test is right for you, even if you've had a hysterectomy.

What is the link between HPV and cervical cancer?

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.
- In rare cases, if an HPV infection doesn't clear up after many years, it can lead to cervical cancer.

It's important to have cervical cancer screening regularly, even if you:

- have only had 1 sexual partner
- have had the HPV vaccine
- have been through menopause
- are a lesbian, bisexual or queer woman
- feel healthy and have no symptoms