



A POSITIVE HPV RESULT: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?



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HPV AND CERVICAL CANCER

- HPV (Human Papillomavirus) is a virus that is spread by genital skin-to-skin contact during sex.
- HPV infection is very common. Four out of five men & women will have HPV at some point in their lives.
- There are many different types or strains of HPV. Genital types that can cause cervical cancer are called “high-risk” types.
- Most HPV infection is cleared by your body’s immune system and causes no problems, but infection over many years with a “high-risk” type can cause serious cell changes on the cervix.
- The cell changes usually cause no symptoms or obvious problems so they can only be found by having regular screenings like a Pap test or an HPV test.
- The most important high-risk HPV types are types 16 & 18: these are the types that are found most often in cervical cancer.
- However, having a high-risk HPV type does NOT mean you have or will get cervical cancer.

WHAT IS HPV SELF-SAMPLING AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- HPV testing looks for high-risk HPV in the cervix or vagina. It can be done by self-collection or by a doctor or nurse. In self-sampling, a woman collects her own sample from the vagina using a cotton swab. These samples are sent to a pathology laboratory to test for high-risk HPV.
- If your HPV test is positive for high-risk HPV you will need further investigation to check for any cellular changes in the cervix. If serious cellular changes are found they can be treated before they turn into cancer.

WHAT DOES MY HPV TEST RESULT MEAN?

Your HPV test is positive.

HPV test	Meaning	Follow up
HPV Negative	You do not have an HPV type that is linked to cellular changes in the cervix	Have regular HPV Screen
You have a high-risk HPV type but not types 16 or 18	You have other HPV types that are linked to cellular changes in the cervix that may require treatment	A HPV Screen is recommended
You have HPV 16/18	You have types 16/18 HPV which is most often linked to cellular changes in the cervix that may require treatment	Your doctor will refer you to a specialist for further examination

WHAT IS A PAP TEST?

A Pap test is a sample examination performed by your health practitioner in which cells are collected from your cervix

- The Pap test looks for changes in the cells of the cervix caused by HPV.
- If your Pap test result is abnormal, it might be one of two types
 - low-grade abnormalities, and
 - high-grade abnormalities.

Low-grade Abnormalities

- These are minor changes that usually go away on their own, but sometimes cause Pap test abnormalities. Most low-grade abnormalities are caused by HPV.
- When a low-grade abnormality is reported, a woman is usually asked to have a repeat Pap test in 12 months. This gives time for the HPV infection to clear and for cells to return to normal. If it doesn’t, an earlier check-up or a colposcopy is recommended.

High-grade Abnormalities

- When a Pap test shows more serious cell changes, this is called a high-grade abnormality. The woman is then usually referred to a specialist for a colposcopy. If left untreated, these cells have a greater chance of developing into cervical cancer.

WHAT IS COLPOSCOPY?

- To look more closely at the cervix a specialist doctor can do a colposcopy. In this examination a special microscope magnifies the cervix. Sometimes a small piece of tissue is taken (a biopsy) for further testing.
- A colposcopy is like having a Pap test, but it takes longer; usually about 10-15 minutes. It can be done in the doctor’s clinic
- If you have a biopsy, your doctor will have the results within a week. They will then be able to discuss with you whether or not you need treatment
- Serious cell changes can be treated before they turn into cancer

IF I HAVE HPV, DO I HAVE CERVICAL CANCER?

- No, having HPV does NOT mean you have or will get cervical cancer.
- HPV is the virus that can cause cervical cancer
- HPV infection is common. Most women have HPV at some time in their lives. Most of the time it is cleared from the body. Sometimes the high-risk types take longer to clear and can cause cell changes

WOULD YOU LIKE MORE INFORMATION?

If you would like to speak to a female PHCN about your result, phone 6826 5200. Let them know you have self-tested for HPV.