

I have had the cervical cancer vaccine, do I still need screening?

Yes, the vaccine only protects against two of the 15 high-risk HPV types. Although these two types caused the majority of cervical cancers, you could be infected with other high-risk types. This is why you need to have routine screening tests even after vaccination. More information is available at www.hpvvaccine.org.au.

If I have had a hysterectomy do I still need to be screened for cervical cancer?

This depends on why you had your hysterectomy and if you still have your cervix. If you had your entire uterus removed for reasons other than cancer, you may not need cervical cancer screening. Talk to your doctor to find out if you still need to be screened.

What if I'm pregnant?

There have not been any problems with self-sampling in pregnant women. However just to be safe do not do the test if you are pregnant.



What is the VCCR?

The Registry is a confidential data base of Victorian women's Pap test results. The Registry's formal name is the Victorian Cervical Cytology Registry (VCCR). It is not-for-profit and funded by the Victorian government.

What information will be recorded?

Your name, date of birth, address, HPV test result, and doctor's name and address will be recorded (if provided), your country of birth, Indigenous status, any screening performed in the past, history of hysterectomy or pregnancy status. Results or further investigations such as Pap tests, colposcopies, biopsies and further HPV tests will also be recorded as they can affect how often you need Pap tests in the future.

Do my results have to go to the Registry?

- Your test results will be recorded with the Victorian Cervical Cytology Registry. When you have your HPV test, your results will be sent to the registry by the laboratory that reported your test.
- The Registry is a voluntary 'opt-off' confidential database or register of Victorian women's Pap test results. However, if you wish to send in a self-collected sample for HPV testing, your results will have to be recorded by the Registry for monitoring purposes. Once the National Registry for Pap tests is up and running in 2017 your results will be maintained by this body.

Who has access to my information?

The Cancer Act allows you, your doctor and the laboratory that is reporting your screening test results to have access to your details. The registered nurse (Marathon Health) will give more information.

How is my privacy protected?

- The registry is committed to protecting your privacy and has policies and procedures in place to ensure this is maintained. These comply with all applicable Privacy legislation. Information is also used for research to improve our knowledge about preventing cervical cancer. No research information identifies an individual person.
- Our full privacy policy can be viewed at www.marathonhealth.com.au/privacy-policy

Want more information?

For more information about Pap tests and preventing cervical cancer visit www.vccr.org or www.papscreen.org.au or call the Registry on (03) 9250 0399 for more information or to update your details.

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The Pap Test Alternative:

The HPV Test and Cervical Cancer



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VCS Pathology

What is HPV?

- HPV (Human Papilloma virus) is a virus.
- Being infected with HPV is very common. Four out of five men and women will have HPV at some point in their lives.

How do you get HPV?

- HPV is spread by genital skin-to-skin contact during sex.
- HPV is very common in men and women who have ever had sex so even if you are in a long-term relationship with one person, or not currently having sex, you could have HPV.
- The virus can hide in your cervix (the lower part of the uterus) for many years before cell changes on the cervix are found.

How is HPV linked to cervical cancer?

- Infection over many years with certain types or strains of HPV (known as high risk types) causes cervical cancer.
- Having HPV does not mean you have or will get cervical cancer. For most women, HPV goes away before it causes any problems. But sometimes the infection persists for a long time and serious cell changes occur in the cervix. If not found and treated these abnormal cells could turn into cancer.

What do the different types of HPV mean?

- The HPV types affecting the cervix are called low-risk or high-risk.
- Some high-risk HPV types take longer to clear from the body. This may increase a woman's risk of developing cervical cancer. Of all the different high-risk HPV types, infection with HPV types 16 and/or 18 are the most likely to cause significant cell changes.
- Low-risk types can cause minor changes to the cells of the cervix, or sometimes genital warts. Low-risk types are usually cleared by the body within one to two years and do not cause cervical cancer.

How can cervical cancer be prevented?

We can never prevent all cases of cervical cancer. But the best protection comes from:

- Vaccinating adolescent girls and boys with the HPV vaccine, and
- Having regular screening tests.

What is a Pap test?

In a Pap test cells from the cervix are collected by a health practitioner and placed onto a glass slide. This is sent to a laboratory where a specially trained scientist looks for cell changes using a microscope. These changes are almost always caused by HPV and are usually not serious. However, if left for many years they could develop into cervical cancer. Finding these changes early means they can usually be treated before anything serious happens. A Pap test is not a check for ovarian cancer or for sexually transmitted infections.

What is a HPV test?

In a HPV test a sample of cells from the cervix or vagina is sent to a laboratory where tests are done to look for high-risk types of HPV. An advantage of a HPV test is that unlike a Pap test, it can be done by the woman herself, or by a nurse or doctor.

What is self-sampling for HPV?

- A woman can take a sample herself from her vagina (using a cotton swab) in the privacy of her own home. This is called self-sampling. The swab is then posted to the laboratory for HPV testing. For details please see the instruction sheet enclosed with the kit.
- No examination by a doctor is needed to do this test.

Why should I do self-sampling?

Scientific studies have shown that:

- Self-sampling is simple to perform at home
- The majority of cervical cancers occur in women who do not have regular screening

Is it accurate?

Vaginal self-sampling is as accurate as a doctor collected Pap test.

How can I do self-sampling?

Please see the instruction sheet enclosed with the kit.

What will happen to my sample?

Once the swab has been posted to the laboratory, it will be tested at VCS Pathology, for high risk HPV. Your HPV result will be sent directly to you, with a copy to your nominated doctor and PHCN from Marathon Health responsible for supporting you through the self-sampling.

How will I get my results?

Your results will be mailed to you within a month. If you have provided your GP contact details, they will also receive a copy of your results. The PHCN will also make phone contact with you to confirm you have received your results and you are clear on the meaning of the pathology and will assist you to schedule an appointment with your GP or Women's Health Nurse.

What do my results mean?

The HPV test will detect if you have the virus that can cause abnormal cells in the cervix. If you are found to have the high-risk HPV, your doctor or PHCN will advise you what type of follow-up is needed to prevent cancer from developing, so it is important that you complete the pathology information form with the invitation letter and return it to us so that we can contact you and your nominated doctor if necessary. **Please remember that testing positive for high-risk HPV does not mean that you have cancer. Most women with HPV will NOT develop cervical cancer (as the virus clears by itself).**

What type of follow-up is required?

HPV Results	Follow-up required*
You do not have HPV	Have regular Pap tests
You have a high risk HPV type but not types 16 or 18	Your doctor or nurse will do a Pap test
You have HPV types 16 or 18	Your doctor will refer you to a specialist for further examination

*These recommendations apply to women 30 years and over

Are there any possible risks with self-sampling?

- Performing self-sampling for HPV does no physical harm. However, it is possible that you may become upset or embarrassed if you find out that you have HPV infection. Remember most women get HPV at some time in their lives.
- If you would like to speak to a female doctor about your result, phone (03) 9250 0300 and ask to speak to one of the Liaison Physicians. Let them know you have self tested for HPV.

Is there any treatment for HPV?

- There is no treatment for the virus (HPV) as your body's immune system usually clears it over time.
- However, the serious cell changes caused by HPV can be treated, which is why it is important for you to have further tests if you are found to have high-risk HPV. Treatment of these cells to stop them becoming cervical cancer is very successful.