

Remember, regular Pap tests are the best way to prevent cervical cancer.



Information on you and your privacy

VCS appreciates that it holds sensitive personal health information. We have strict confidentiality practices in place to protect your privacy.

How is this personal information collected?

This is collected from a practitioner who orders your test. If you provide information directly to us, this may be entered on your record as well.

How may personal information be used?

Your personal information may be used for:

- Reporting the test ordered
- Charging for services (where applicable)
- The Victorian Cervical Cytology Registry (VCCR) to remind you or your practitioner if you are overdue for a Pap test or other test. You can get more information about VCCR from your practitioner or by telephoning VCCR on (03) 9250 0399 or accessing their website at www.vccr.org.
- Research to improve our knowledge, particularly on how to prevent cancer of the cervix. No research information identifies an individual person.

Does my information have to be provided to Medicare Australia?

In order for the National Cervical Screening Programme to develop an accurate picture of Pap smears in Australia, VCS sends information (name, address, date of birth and Medicare number) to Medicare Australia. This is done to monitor and improve the cervical screening programme.

However, the choice is yours. If you do not want your information to be sent to Medicare Australia, please notify us by email at director@vcs.org.au or write to us (details below). We will still report your Pap test as usual.

Our full privacy policy can be viewed on our website www.vcs.org.au or may be obtained by telephoning VCS on (03) 9250 0300.



Victorian Cytology Service

PO Box 178, Carlton South, Victoria
Telephone: (03) 9250 0300 Fax: (03) 9349 1949
Website: www.vcs.org.au

Pap tests and you. Quality matters.



Victorian Cytology Service

What is a Pap test?*

A Pap test is done to look for cell changes on the cervix (the lower part of the uterus). These changes are often due to infection with the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV).

A small sample of cells is taken from the cervix, put onto a glass slide, sent to a laboratory and examined by a scientist. The doctor or nurse who collects your Pap test should give you the results usually within one to two weeks of the test being taken.



* For more details about Pap tests as well as information about HPV contact PapScreen Victoria on 131120 or visit their website: www.papscreen.org.au.

What do the results mean?

A negative report means no significant changes were seen in the cells. Another Pap test in two years time is generally recommended.

A report of low-grade abnormalities means minor changes were found. These changes are common and often just disappear. Another Pap test in 12 months is usually recommended, or sometimes further tests are advised.

A report of high-grade abnormalities means there are changes that your doctor will need to investigate further. A colposcopy is generally needed; your doctor can explain what this involves.

An unsatisfactory test result occurs when the cells cannot be properly examined, or the sample of the cells is too small. There are a number of reasons why this may happen. These are mostly out of the control of the person who performed the test or the laboratory that examined it. Another Pap test 6 to 12 weeks later is generally recommended.

How accurate is it?

Like all screening tests, the Pap test is not 100% accurate. This is due to a variety of reasons. For example, the test may not always include abnormal cells even if these are present on your cervix. Some tests can be hard to interpret or there may be abnormal cells which are not seen at the time of screening.

However with regular Pap tests, more than 90% of cases of squamous cancer of the cervix can be prevented. Squamous cancer is the most common type of cervical cancer. Other rarer types of cervical cancer are usually not able to be prevented by regular Pap tests.

Your best protection is to have Pap tests every 2 years or as directed by your doctor or nurse.



How often should I have a Pap test?

Because new cells in the cervix regularly replace old cells, and because a Pap test is not 100% accurate, we strongly recommend that you have a Pap test every two years until you are 70 years old (unless your doctor has told you that you need tests more often). Regular tests are the best way to prevent cervical cancer.

If your results are being forwarded to the Pap Test Registry, please remember to notify them on (03) 9250 0399 of any change of address during the next three years. This will allow them to post your reminder letter to the correct address. Alternatively you can update your address on their website www.vccr.org. Having regular Pap tests is an important way to stay healthy.

What is a ThinPrep test?

The ThinPrep test is another way of preparing a Pap test. The doctor or nurse takes a usual Pap test, but then rinses the instruments in fluid to collect excess cells.

This fluid is then sent to the laboratory with the usual test. At the laboratory, another slide is made from the cells in the fluid.

How does a ThinPrep test differ from a usual Pap test?

When an ordinary Pap test is taken, there may be some blood or mucus on the slide. Although this is normal, it can make it difficult to see cells from the cervix. ThinPrep processing separates out the cells that need to be looked at and puts them on a slide.

The end result is that two slides are looked at in the laboratory rather than one; the one made by the doctor or nurse, and the additional one made in the laboratory.

Will there be a charge for a ThinPrep test?

If you wish to have the ThinPrep test in addition to an ordinary Pap test, you will be sent an account. This account is not rebateable by Medicare or private health insurance.