# Cervical Cancer Screening

## The What, Why, How and When

## What

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the name of a group of viruses that infect the skin. Some types of HPV are linked to abnormal cell changes on the cervix that can lead to cervical cancer.

While most HPV infections will clear on their own and won't cause any health problems, sometimes the infection does not clear and can cause cell changes on the cervix. These changes may lead to cervical cancer if they aren't found and treated.

## Why

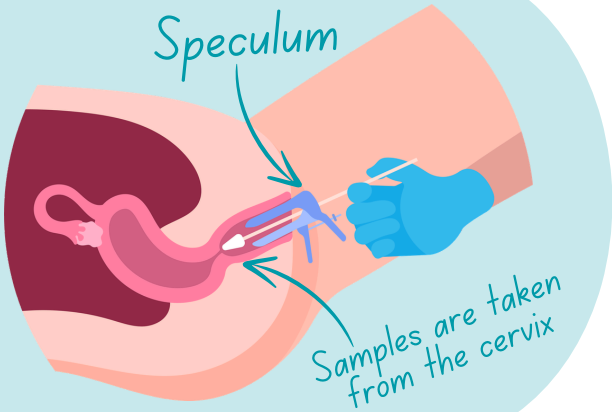
Screening can prevent cancer. Regular screening tests—Pap and HPV tests—can help find problems early and prevent cancer from developing. **The Pap test** can find abnormal cell changes on the cervix before they have a chance to turn into cancer. These changes can then be treated.

Unlike a Pap test, which only detects abnormal cell changes, an **HPV test** can identify high-risk types of HPV. High-risk types of HPV can lead to cervical cancer and this test helps health care providers know which patients are at greatest risk

## How

During a Pap test or an HPV test, a health care provider will use a medical instrument called a speculum to examine the vaginal area and view the cervix. The cervix is the opening to the uterus.

The health care provider will then use a small brush to collect a sample cells from your cervix for testing. The whole procedure is quick and takes just a few minutes.




## When

Screening should start with the Pap test at age 21. (Screening is not recommended for those under age 21.)

Starting at age 30, there are three options available for screening:

- A Pap test alone every three years
- Co-testing with a Pap test and an HPV test, every five years
- An HPV test alone every five years

Learn more about HPV and cervical cancer screening, from the National Cervical Cancer Coalition at

**www.nccc-online.org**

NCCC
National Cervical Cancer Coalition
A program of the American Sexual Health Association