Healthy Habits

Here are some ways to guard against cervical cancer and infection:

- Have Pap tests as often as your health care provider suggests. Finding and treating problems early is always best.
- Practice safer sex. Always use a latex condom and limit your number of sex partners. This can help reduce your risk of getting a sexually transmitted disease.
- Don't smoke. Researchers think smoking and cervical cancer may be linked.

Protect yourself with healthy habits. Have Pap tests as often as directed. Practice safer sex, and don't smoke.

When to Have a Pap Test

It's best to start having Pap tests at age 18 (sooner if you are sexually active). Even if your cervix has been removed, Pap tests are still needed to detect abnormal cells in your vagina. Ask your health care provider how often you should have a Pap test done.

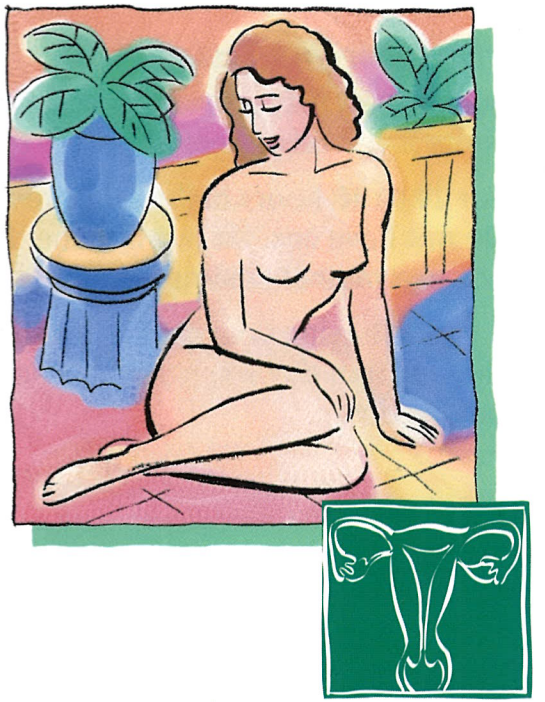
Consultant:
Patricia Lord, MSN, RN
With contributions by:
Michael E. Katz, MD, OB/GYN
Keith Millette, MD,
Family Practice
Debbie Powell, ARNP

KRAMES
Health and Safety Education

a division of StayWell

This brochure is not intended as a substitute for professional health care.
©1998, 2002 The StayWell Company,
1100 Grundy Lane, San Bruno, CA 94066-3030.
www.krames.com 800-333-3032. All rights reserved.
Lithographed in Canada.

Your Pap Test



WOMEN'S HEALTH SERIES

What Is a PAP Test?

A Pap test is a simple screening procedure that is done in your health care provider's office. The Pap test helps find cancer and certain other problems in the cervix (where the uterus and vagina meet). Problems in the cervix often produce no symptoms during the early stages. Because of this, a Pap test is the best way to find these problems when they are easiest to treat.

Before Your Pap Test

Your Pap test may provide more accurate results if you take these simple steps:

- For 24 to 48 hours before your test: Do not have sex. Do not douche. Do not use vaginal creams.
- If you're having your period, change the test to a day when you will not be bleeding.

How Is a Pap Test Done?

You will lie on an exam table with your feet in footrests or stirrups. An instrument called a speculum is used to gently open your vagina. Then a cell sample is taken from your cervix. You may feel a slight pinch or pressure. Some women have light vaginal bleeding after the test.

A speculum is used to open the vagina so cells can be taken from the cervix.

Try to relax during your Pap test. It only takes a minute.

After Your Test

The cells are placed on a glass slide or in a test tube. Then the sample is sent to a lab. In the lab, each sample is studied under a microscope. Your health care provider can tell you when to expect your results from the lab.

Getting Your Pap Test Results

You may receive your results through the mail or by a phone call. It may take a few weeks to get your results.

- A normal result means your cervix is healthy. Have your next Pap test when you're told to.
- An abnormal result means the lab saw something unusual in your sample. Follow up with your health care provider. You may need to repeat the Pap test or have other tests to diagnose the problem.