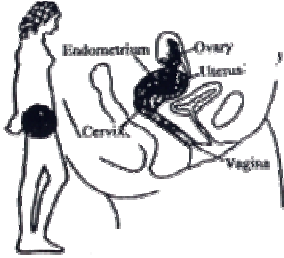


Screening for Cancer of the Cervix

(Pap Smear)

What is the cervix?

The cervix is the opening of the uterus (womb) and is found at the end of the vagina.



What is cancer of the cervix?

The outside of the cervix is covered with a thin layer of tissue. The cells that make up this tissue grow, change and then fall away. Most of the cell changes are natural and normal. Occasionally the cells change in an abnormal way and these abnormal cells sometimes develop into cancer.

What is a Pap smear and why is it important?

A Pap smear is a medical test that checks if the cells on the cervix tissue are changing in a normal or abnormal way.

Having a Pap smear done regularly is the most effective way to prevent cancer of the cervix. Regular screening by having a Pap smear is the best way to find

abnormal cell changes early. If cell changes are found early, they may be treated and prevent cervical cancer. Regular screening has reduced the number of women getting cancer of the cervix by 85%

Who should have a Pap Smear?

The BC Cancer Agency and BC Medical Association recommend:

- all women who have had or are having vaginal intercourse have a Pap smear once a year.
- after three normal Pap smears in a row, a woman should have a Pap smear every two years until age 69.
- women with abnormal Pap smears should have further testing and if necessary treatment. After further testing and treatment, they should have a Pap smear once a year.
- if women are 69 years or older and have had three normal Pap smears in the last ten years, they can stop having Pap smears.
- women who have had a hysterectomy (uterus removed) for non cancer reasons do not need routine Pap smears.

How is the Pap smear done?

- During a pelvic exam the doctor will put an instrument called a speculum into the vagina. This instrument gently opens the vagina so the doctor can see the cervix.
- The doctor then uses a small flat tool or brush to gather cells from the

cervix tissue. This is very easy to do and usually does not hurt.

- The cells are put on a glass slide and sent to the lab at the B C Cancer Agency.

What should I do to get ready for my Pap Smear?

- Do not douche (wash inside the vagina), put any medication, lubricants or foam in your vagina for 24 hours before the Pap smear.
- Do not have a Pap smear while you are menstruating.

How do I learn about the results of the Pap Smear ?

Your doctor will receive a report of the results in 6-8 weeks. The Asian Women's Health Clinic will make sure that you know about any test results that are not normal by writing to you. They will also write to you to let you know when you need your next Pap smear.

What does it mean if the results of my Pap Smear are abnormal?

It does not mean you have cancer. Only a small number of women with abnormal Pap smears have cancer. If your Pap smear shows cell changes you will be asked to either:

- Have the Pap smear repeated, or
- Have an examination by a specialist doctor

Asian Women's Health Clinic

Pap Smear Test

BC Women's Hospital

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For appointments and information, please call :

Phone: 604-684-1628



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