



Pap Smears

A PART OF EVERY WOMAN'S GOOD HEALTH.

WHAT IS A PAP SMEAR?

A Pap Smear is a simple procedure usually performed by your doctor, in which cells are removed from the cervix and sent to the laboratory to be examined.

WHY DO YOU NEED A PAP SMEAR?

The cells contained in the Pap Smear are examined under a microscope to identify the presence of any cellular changes and abnormalities which may lead to cancer. If these conditions are detected at an early stage, the development and spread of cancer can be significantly reduced. The Pap Smear may also allow for the detection of some viral infections such as herpes and genital warts as well as vaginal infections. Healthscope Pathology offers specific tests in order to diagnose such infections.

WHO SHOULD HAVE A PAP SMEAR?

Women should have their first Pap Smear following the onset of sexual activity or by the age of 18, then regularly through to the age of 70. Your doctor may not recommend Pap Smears beyond the age of 70 if previous Pap Smears have shown no abnormalities. Women who have had a hysterectomy for benign conditions may not require Pap Smears, however this needs to be discussed with your doctor.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD YOU HAVE A PAP SMEAR?

You should have a routine Pap Smear every two years unless your doctor recommends that you have them more frequently. If you experience unexpected bleeding or increased discharge at any time, you should consult your doctor even if your recent Pap Smear was normal.

WHAT IF YOUR PAP SMEAR RESULT IS ABNORMAL?

If your result is abnormal, this does not mean that you have cancer. Most Pap Smear results are normal, but if precancerous changes are detected in the early stages, treatment is usually very effective. There are follow-up programs and guidelines in place to assist your doctor in the management of abnormal Smears and this will vary depending on the degree of change or abnormality detected.

HOW ACCURATE IS THE PAP SMEAR TEST?

Like all screening tests, the Pap Smear is not 100% accurate as occasionally abnormal cells may not be detected for various reasons. Any changes that are not detected on one Pap Smear will usually be picked up on the next Smear, two years later. In most cases, cellular abnormalities take up to 10 years to develop into cancer hence regular Smears provide a means to detect these changes before they become serious.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO GET THE RESULT OF A PAP SMEAR?

Your doctor should be able to provide you with a result approximately one week after the Smear is taken.

WHAT OTHER TESTS SHOULD YOU CONSIDER AT THE TIME OF YOUR PAP SMEAR?

ThinPrep™

This sample often accompanies a Pap Smear. The device used to collect the Pap Smear is rinsed in a 'ThinPrep'™ vial to obtain any remaining cellular material. This ensures that 100% of the cells collected are captured for testing. This sample is then processed to produce a slide, which is examined together with the conventional Pap Smear.

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Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

You may wish to discuss your personal situation with your doctor in order to determine whether you require testing for STDs. Genital samples required for the testing of certain STDs can be collected at the time of your Pap Smear. The more commonly tested STDs are: Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea, Hepatitis, HIV/AIDS, Herpes and Warts/HPV (Human Papilloma Virus). Following the preparation of a slide from the ThinPrep™ sample, remaining material can be used to test for Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea, Herpes and HPV Genotyping. HPV Genotyping will determine whether you have one of the high-risk HPV viruses known to increase the risk of developing Cervical Cancer.

DO YOUR RESULTS GO TO THE 'PAP SMEAR REGISTRY'?

The Pap Smear Registry holds a confidential list of the Pap Smear results for women and sends reminders when the time for your next Pap Smear has elapsed. Healthscope Pathology will send all Pap Smear results to the registry unless otherwise stated on the request form. You must inform your doctor if you do not wish to be placed on this registry.

Providing services since 1936, Healthscope Pathology operates throughout Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Malaysia.

Healthscope Pathology has purpose built, state-of-the-art service and molecular research laboratories which ensure the highest standard of testing.



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