



BASIC INFORMATION

DEFINITION

- Examination of the female external and internal genitalia. The Pap smear (cervical smear), carried out during the pelvic examination, is a laboratory study used for detecting early abnormal cell changes that could lead to cancer.
- The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommends regular Pap tests from the onset of sexual intercourse to age 65. Women without risk factors for cervical cancer should have a Pap test every 1-3 years. Though some health care professionals still recommend yearly Pap tests for women who have no risk factors for cervical cancer, others recommend Pap tests every 2-3 years for women who have had at least two normal tests 1 year apart.
- Getting a Pap smear does not cause a woman to lose her virginity, but a patient should inform her doctor of her virgin status so that special care can be taken when needed.

REASONS FOR PROCEDURE

- Routine screening and diagnostic check.
- Investigate the cause of abdominal or pelvic pain.
- Unexpected vaginal bleeding or discharge.
- Bladder problems.
- A general check before prescribing contraceptives.
- Pain during intercourse.
- Suspected sexually transmitted disease.
- In pregnancy, to assess the position of the baby.
- As a part of infertility studies.
- Screening test for cancer.

RISK INCREASES WITH

None expected.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURE

- Do not douche, use tampons, or use vaginal medications for at least 24 hours before having a Pap test.
- The examination is performed in the examiner's office. The entire pelvic exam takes about 10 minutes.
- On the examining table, you will lie on your back with knees bent and legs are usually placed in stirrups for support.
- The external genital organs will be examined visually for lumps, sores, skin discoloration, inflammation and qualities suggesting the general hormonal status.
- A speculum is placed inside and opened. The speculum is an instrument that holds the vaginal walls apart and allows the examiner to see the cervix and vagina and check for inflammation, infection, scars or growths. There may be some feeling of pressure on the bladder or rectum with the speculum in place.
- With a swab, a sampling of cells is taken from the cervix and placed on a glass slide for the Pap smear test. If you have an infection or there are signs of infection present, a sample of vaginal or cervical discharge may be taken for laboratory analysis also. Some newer Pap testing methods include the AutoCyte-Screen (automated review of a nega-

tive Pap smear) and ThinPrep (liquid collection and processing method for cervical cell specimens). A PapSure test may be used after a standard Pap test. It uses a special light and magnifier to view the cervix for abnormal cells.

- After the speculum is removed, the examiner will place two fingers in the vagina and the other hand on top of the abdomen to check placement of uterus and ovaries and to assess their size, shape, consistency and tenderness. This procedure may cause some discomfort.
- Usually there is a rectal examination, where the examiner places one finger in the rectum (often, one finger is placed in the vagina at the same time) to check the rectum itself and other nearby structures.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

There are no aftereffects expected from the examinations. In routine testing, the results are usually normal.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- None expected from the examination.
- The findings may indicate a disorder to be treated or a condition requiring further diagnostic testing. For certain types of abnormal findings, a repeat Pap test in three to four months is recommended. For others, a colposcopy with a cervical biopsy may be recommended.



POSTPROCEDURE CARE

GENERAL MEASURES

- There may be some slight vaginal discharge following the examination. Use a tissue to wipe, or place one in the underpants temporarily. If there is bleeding (rare), a sanitary pad may be necessary.
- Any findings from the physical examination or further diagnostic testing recommendations will be discussed with you by the examiner.
- The results of the Pap smear testing may take a few days to two weeks and are usually reported by phone or mail. Be sure you and your health care provider follow up on any abnormalities that are detected. A Pap test alone does not diagnose cervical cancer. Other tests are used to confirm that cancer is present. Even if Pap test results show evidence of cancer, there is a 20% chance that it is not present.
- For more information, check the library or the internet.

MEDICATION

Medicine is not necessary.

ACTIVITY

No restrictions.

DIET

No special diet.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

You have not had a routine pelvic examination and Pap smear as recommended.