

Health PEI

Cervical Self-Screening

The power to screen is in your hands.

Nearly all cervical cancers are caused by HPV. The good news is cervical cancer is almost entirely preventable.

What is human papillomavirus (HPV)?

HPV is a common virus that spreads through sexual contact. This includes intimate touching, oral, vaginal and anal sex.

Most people will have an HPV infection at some point in their life and never know it. There are usually no symptoms. The majority of HPV infections don't cause any problems and are cleared by your body within 2 years.

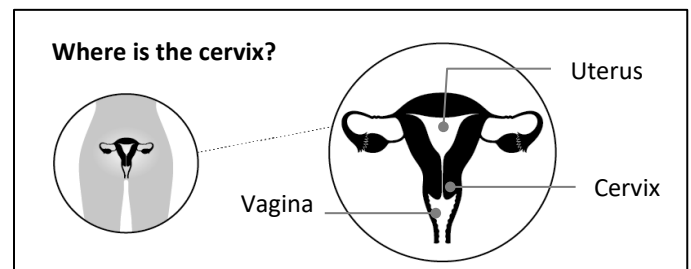
Sometimes, certain HPV types don't clear on their own and can cause cells on your cervix to become abnormal. These abnormal cells may become cancer cells over time.

Why is cervix screening important?

The cell changes that lead to cervical cancer can happen without you knowing.

Screening can help:

- Find out if you're at risk for developing abnormal cells. Finding and treating abnormal cells early can help prevent cancer.
- Find cancer at an early stage when there are more treatment options.



Play an active role in your health. Cervix self-screening makes it possible to screen for cervical cancer yourself, anywhere you feel safe and comfortable.

Should I be screened for cervical cancer? You should take the cervical screening test if you:

- Have a cervix
- Are 25 to 65 years old. If you are 66 or older, you may review and discuss your screening history with a health professional first for a possible stop of routine cervical screening.
- Have been sexually active in your life (past or present, any skin-to-skin contact of genital areas)
- Are due for screening: Your last normal Pap smear was more than three years ago; or negative HPV test was more than five years ago. cervical cancer.

Is this cervical self-screening test for me? You can use this self-screening test to take a sample from your vagina if you:

- are in good health
- are NOT taking immunosuppressant drugs
- are NOT an organ transplant recipient,
- are NOT HIV positive
- are NOT pregnant
- are/were NOT treated for high-grade cervical cell abnormalities or cervical cancer.
- are NOT experiencing symptoms, such as unusual bleeding or abnormal, prolonged vaginal discharge.

If you are experiencing symptoms or if this cervical self-screening test is not for you, please contact your family physician, nurse practitioner or health professional to discuss screening options or the right care for you.

If the lab finds HPV on your sample, you will need further examination by a health care provider. The health care provider will need to look at your cervix.

Will I do it correctly? Will it hurt?

The test is easy and shouldn't hurt. You collect a sample by turning a small swab inside your vagina; it doesn't have to go in too far. If you follow the instructions inside your kit, you're doing it correctly. The sample you collect is just as accurate as a provider-taken sample.

What will my results mean?

- **If no HPV is found:** You don't need to screen again for another 5 years. It's highly unlikely that you'll have abnormal cells on your cervix.
- **If HPV is found:** Depending on your result, you may need a Pap test or a colposcopy (a procedure that looks at the cervix more closely). This doesn't mean you have or will develop cancer. It does mean more visits with a health care provider are needed.

Should I get the HPV vaccine?

Yes! Generally, anyone aged 9 and older should get the vaccine. The vaccine is very effective at protecting against HPV types that cause most cervical cancers. Learn more: www.princeedwardisland.ca/HPVvaccine

How to get screened

1. **Complete the test.** Closely follow the instructions in the kit. The test is painless and very easy to do. You can also ask a health care provider to explain or show you how to take the sample or they can take the sample for you.
2. **Return the kit for testing.** Drop off your completed kit as soon as possible at your nearest hospital lab or at a health centre. If your testing kit contains a prepaid return envelope, please drop it off at a post box as soon as possible. We will mail your results 4 to 6 weeks after returning your kit.

If you don't want to complete self-screening or have any symptoms, please schedule a cervical screening test with a health care provider. Visit healthPEI.ca/CervicalScreening to find a clinic near you or ask your family physician or nurse practitioner.

By completing the cervical self-screening test and filling out the cervical self-screening request form (purple), you will be entered into the PEI Cervical Screening Service. As a registered participant, you will receive test results and reminders when it is time to be screened again.

Your personal health information will be kept confidential and comply with the strict regulations of the PEI Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPP) Act.

Scan me - How to take your own sample



Contact Us

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This factsheet is available in French, please call Cervical Screening Service 1-888-561-2233 or email colcerscreening@ihis.org

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