

Abnormal Pap Test: What You Should Know



Take good care of your health, for you, and for those you care about.



Family PACT

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The Pap test can save lives.

The Pap test checks for changes in the cells of the cervix (the opening of the uterus). These changes could lead to cancer. When abnormal changes are found, treatment is needed before cancer develops. The earlier a person gets treatment, the better!

When a Pap test is abnormal, what does that mean?

If a Pap test is abnormal, it usually does not mean there is cancer of the cervix. Most of the time, an abnormal Pap test means:

- There are abnormal cells that could become cancer if not treated.

AND/OR

- There may be an infection with human papillomavirus (high-risk HPV).

What if there are abnormal cell changes?

Most of the time, the cell changes will go away on their own. Your provider may want you to come back for a Pap test in 12 months.

Or you may be asked to have a special exam of your cervix called a colposcopy.

What happens during a colposcopy?

This careful look at your cervix does not hurt and may be all that is needed.

- During this exam, the provider will use a bright light and a magnifying lens to examine your cervix.



My provider explained the exam to me.

The provider may also need to do a biopsy at the same time.

- A tiny bit of cervical tissue is taken and sent to a lab.
- During the biopsy, you may feel a little pinch or some mild cramping.

What happens after these exams?

Some people will need no treatment at all and will have follow-up exams only. Other people will need an office treatment to remove the abnormal cells.

Your provider will talk to you about what treatment you may need. The treatment will depend on the type and location of abnormal cells.

Get the care you need. Don't wait!

The important thing is to get the treatment you need when your provider recommends it.

- Talk with your provider about anything you don't understand or, worried about.
- Keep asking questions until you get answers that you understand.
- Get the tests and exams you need. Don't put them off!

Protect yourself from cancer of the cervix!

- Get a high-risk HPV test as often as your provider recommends.
- Get the follow-up care you need. Don't wait.
- If you are younger than 46 years old, ask about the HPV vaccine.
- Don't smoke cigarettes. Smoking increases the chances of developing cancer of the cervix.
- Using condoms every time you have sex. It may lower the chances you will be infected with other types of HPV that can cause cancer of the cervix.