

# Abnormal HPV Test: What You Should Know

## The HPV test can save lives.

The HPV test checks for certain types of human papilloma virus (high-risk HPV). The virus can cause changes in the cells of the cervix in women 30 and older. This could lead to cancer of the cervix.

A pap smear is done on the sample sent to the lab when the test shows that a high-risk HPV type is found.

## When an HPV test is positive, what does that mean?

If an HPV test is positive, it usually does not mean there is cancer of the cervix. It means that there may be abnormal cells on the cervix. This could become cancer if not treated.

## 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 another HPV test in 12 months.

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



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



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## 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 women will need no treatment at all and will have follow-up exams only. Other women 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!

It's important 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.