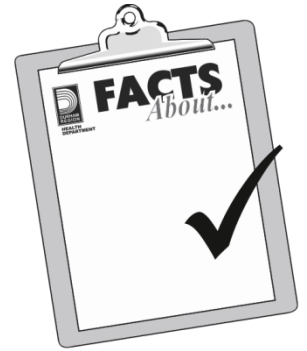




# FACTS

## About...



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

# Pap or Swab

## What is it?

A pap test is a simple test that is done by your health care provider. The purpose of the test is to look at the health of the cervix and screen for signs of cervical cancer. The cervix is the lower part of the uterus and connects the uterus to the vagina. During a pap test, a speculum is placed in the vagina to see the cervix. While the speculum is inside the vagina, cells are gently collected from the surface of the cervix. The cells are then sent to a lab to test for cell changes. Most early cell changes can be treated before they become cancerous. Cervical cancer is 90% preventable with regular pap testing.

## Do I need a Pap test?

- Women ages 21 to 69 should have regular pap tests.
- You can stop having pap tests at age 70 if you have had 3 or more negative pap tests in the previous ten years.
- Pap testing should only be done in women 21 years of age or older who are or have ever been sexually active.
- Sexual activity includes intercourse, as well as digital or oral sexual activity with a partner, involving the genital area.
- Women who have a normal pap test result should continue having a pap test once every three years to screen for cervical cancer.
- Women who have had a pap test will receive a reminder letter to inform them of when their next pap test is due.
- Women who have sex with women should follow the same testing guidelines as women who have sex with men.
- Transgender men who still have a cervix should be screened according to the guidelines.
- Women who are immunocompromised should speak to their healthcare provider about how often they should have pap testing done.

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For more information

Durham Region Health Department

905-668-2020 1-800-841-2729 durham.ca

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



## How to prepare for your Pap test?

- Go for your pap test when you are not on your period.
- Do not have sex, use tampons, or put foams or medications in your vagina for 2 days (48 hours) before your pap test.
- Even if you are not able to prepare for the test, be sure to go to your appointment.

## What is a swab?

A pap test is **not** a test for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or other vaginal infections. However, it is common that when a woman is having a pap test she will also be tested for other infections using a vaginal swab.

Your health care provider uses a cotton swab to collect a sample of the fluid that moistens the lining of the vagina. A swab can test for infections such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, yeast, bacterial vaginosis, or trichomonas.

Women who have vaginal symptoms (odour, itching, or an increase or change in discharge) should have a swab done to test for these infections.

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