

What is Cervical Cancer Screening?

Cervical cancer screening is used to find changes in the cells of the cervix that could lead to cancer. Screening includes cervical cytology (also called the Pap test or Pap smear) and, for some women, testing for human papillomavirus (HPV).

Cervical Cancer Screening Benefits:

It usually takes 3–7 years for high-grade changes in cervical cells to become cancer. Cervical cancer screening may detect these changes before they become cancer. Women with low-grade changes can be tested more frequently to see if their cells go back to normal. Women with high-grade changes can get treatment to have the cells removed

Limitation of Cervical Cancer Screening

- No screening test is 100% accurate, but the scientific evidence tells us that early detection is better.

Frequency of screening:

The frequency for repeat screening for average risk, symptom free women is:

- Every three years for women aged 25-29 years.
- Every 5 years for women 30-65 years.
- Annually for women who are immune-compromised due to disease or medication

Eligibility for Screening Criteria

- All sexually active women (past or present), symptom free, aged 25- 65 years residing in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, except where exclusion criteria for screening apply.
- Women are excluded from screening if:
 - They have received a total hysterectomy for benign indications; or
 - They are over 65 years, (if the last three previous smears were negative).
- Women who have had subtotal hysterectomy (preserving the cervix) or hysterectomy due to cervical cancer or precancerous condition should continue to have cervical screening; and
- Screening recommendations remain the same regardless of whether or not they have received the HPV vaccination.

How is cervical cancer screening done?

Cervical cancer screening includes the Pap test and, for some women, an HPV test. Both tests use cells taken from the cervix. The screening process is simple and fast. You lie on an exam table and a speculum is used to open the vagina. The speculum gives a clear view of the cervix and upper vagina. Cells are removed from the cervix with a brush or other sampling instrument.

The cells usually are put into a special liquid and sent to a laboratory for testing:

- For a Pap test, the sample is examined to see if abnormal cells are present.
- For an HPV test, the sample is tested for the presence of 13–14 of the most common high-risk HPV types.

What you can expect During the Pap smear

- You'll lie down on your back on an exam table with your knees bent. Your heels rest in supports called stirrups.
- Your doctor will gently insert an instrument called a speculum into your vagina. The speculum holds the walls of your vagina apart so that your doctor can easily see your cervix. Inserting the speculum may cause a sensation of pressure in your pelvic area.
- Then your doctor will take samples of your cervical cells using a soft brush and a flat scraping device called a spatula.
- After your Pap smear, you can go about your day without restrictions.

Smear taking will be avoided in the following circumstances and you will be advised when to return for a pap test:

- Menstruation, blood loss, breakthrough bleeding;
- Vaginal inflammation/ infection;
- Pregnancy (Unless a previous smear was abnormal and in the interim the woman becomes pregnant, then the follow-up smear must not be delayed).

Screening outcomes and referrals

- You will be notified in writing of the result of your screening tests, you will receive a written report regarding your screening results within 21 days (3 weeks) of the date of specimen taken.
- If the test outcome is normal, you will follow the routine frequency screening.



CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING EDUCATION MATERIAL

- If the test outcome is unsatisfactory, it must be repeated within 6-12 weeks, treating infection, if present, as indicated.
- If the Pap test outcome is abnormal (cytology showed intraepithelial lesions or malignancy and/or HPV positive), the physician will discuss with you in details regarding the next step of how to be managed.