

## Cervical Cancer Screening Pap and Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) Testing

Traditionally, the Pap test has been the primary measure for screening women for cervical cancer. The Pap test is used to detect abnormal cells in and around the cervix. The cervix is the part of the womb, or uterus, which opens to the vagina. Abnormal cells collected during the Pap test can be identified before cervical cancer develops.

In addition to the Pap test, MD Anderson's cervical cancer screening guidelines include testing for the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) for some women. HPV is a group of very common viruses spread between partners. Some strains of HPV can cause the growth of non-cancerous abnormal cells. In some cases, the cells may develop into cervical cancer. These high-risk strains of HPV are present in more than 99 percent of cervical cancer cases. An HPV test looks for these strains of HPV.

If you have had the HPV vaccine, you still need to follow the recommended screening guidelines. For more information, see the patient information sheet "Human Papilloma Virus."

### What are MD Anderson's cervical cancer screening guidelines?

#### Women At Average Risk of Cervical Cancer

- **Age 20 and younger** – Cervical cancer screening is not recommended.
- **Age 21 to 29** – Women should get a Pap test every three years. HPV testing should not be used for screening in this age group.
- **Age 30 to 65** – Women should follow one of the screening schedules below:
  - get a Pap test **and** HPV test every five years. This screening is preferred by MD Anderson.
  - OR get a Pap test alone every three years.
- **Age 66 and older** – If you have had normal Pap tests in the last 10 years, speak with your doctor about whether you need to continue screening.
- **Women who have had a hysterectomy (removal of the uterus) for non-cancerous reasons:**
  - If your hysterectomy included removal of the cervix, speak with your doctor about whether you need to continue screening.
  - If your hysterectomy did not include removal of the cervix, follow the recommendations above for women who have not had a hysterectomy.

## **Women At Increased Risk of Cervical Cancer**

Women at increased risk for cervical cancer may need to be followed more closely. Talk to your health care provider to see if you have risks for cervical cancer. Your health care provider will determine the appropriate screening schedule for you.

Women with the following risk factors are at increased risk for cervical cancer:

- Persistent HPV infection after the age of 30
- Diethylstilbestrol (DES) exposure before birth
- HIV infection
- Weakened immune system due to organ transplant, chemotherapy or chronic steroid use
- History of cervical cancer or severe cervical dysplasia (pre-cancer)

Lifestyles that may increase the risks of cervical cancer include cigarette smoking, first intercourse at an early age and many sex partners. Lack of regular screening may also increase the risk of cervical cancer.

## **Is an HPV test done at the same time as the Pap test?**

An HPV test may be done at the same time as the Pap test. MD Anderson and national guidelines recommend HPV testing for women age 30 and older.

### **Women 21 to 29 years of age**

An HPV test is not recommended as part of the regular Pap test for women 21 to 29 years of age. At this age, the immune system is more likely to clear the virus. Regular HPV testing may result in unnecessary interventions and follow-up care.

### **Women 30 years of age and older**

It is recommended that women 30 years of age and older be screened for HPV during their regular Pap test. HPV infections can reoccur, which could result in cellular changes of the cervix.

## **For More Information**

For more information on Pap test preparation and the procedure, please ask for the patient information sheet “Pap Smear.”

For more information about cervical cancer screening recommendations, please visit MD Anderson’s prevention and screening webpage at: <http://www.mdanderson.org/prevention> and click “Cancer Screening Recommendations.”