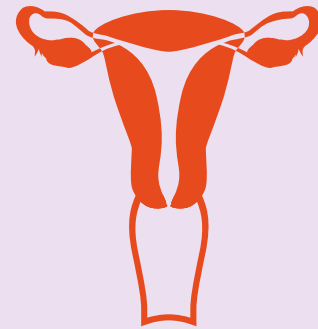




Cervical Screening Test & HPV

What is a Cervical Screening Test?

The Cervical Screening Test (CST) is a simple procedure that detects the human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV may cause cells in the cervix to change and become abnormal and these changes can sometimes progress to cervical cancer. If you are 25 to 74 years old, have a cervix and have ever been sexually active, you should have a Cervical Screening Test. A CST is the best way to protect yourself from cervical cancer.



What is HPV?

HPV is common and more than 100 types of HPV have been identified. Fifteen of the anogenital HPV types have been classified as high risk for the development of cancer (oncogenic types). Anogenital HPV is transmitted by genital skin-to-skin contact with a person of any gender. The high risk oncogenic (cancer-causing) HPV types 16 and 18 cause most cervical cancers. The low risk HPV types 6 and 11 (NOT oncogenic) cause most genital warts.

Do I have to tell any partners that I have HPV?

HPV is not considered a sexually transmissible infection and it is not a notifiable infection like chlamydia or gonorrhoea. You may wish to discuss your CST result with a partner; however, you do not need to contact previous sexual partners to inform them of your CST result.

What will happen to me if I have HPV detected in my CST?

For most people, the body's immune system clears the HPV infection within 1–2 years. For a minority of people, the HPV persists and can cause the cell changes mentioned above.

HPV is reported in a CST result as HPV 16, HPV 18 and HPV other. For any person who has HPV detected on their CST, an additional test called Reflex Liquid Based Cytology (LBC) is automatically done by the laboratory to see whether HPV is causing any cell changes to the cervix. In most cases, the same sample is used, and a separate test is not required. The combined test results determine whether further tests are required and determine the timing for your next CST. You will be advised of your CST result and what you need to do next.

What do my results mean?

Your CST checks for the presence of HPV 16, HPV 18 and the other thirteen oncogenic HPV types (HPV Other). When you receive your CST result it will be reported as one of the following:

1. Low Risk

This indicates that you do not have an HPV infection and you will be recommended to rescreen in 5 years.

2. Intermediate Risk

This indicates that you have tested positive for HPV Other (not 16/18), and your LBC is negative or shows low-grade (minor) changes to the cells. Your results letter will advise you when you next need a CST or if you require a referral for other investigations.

3. High Risk

If you have tested positive for HPV 16 or HPV 18, or if your LBC shows high-grade (advanced) changes to the cells, you will be referred to a Specialist for further assessment and investigations, which may include having a colposcopy.



What does an Unsatisfactory Cervical Screening Test result mean?

An unsatisfactory CST result means that the laboratory could not process the sample to provide a report. In this case you will be asked to return to the Clinic and have a repeat test in 6–12 weeks. There may be several reasons why this occurs, including an inadequate sample or technical difficulty for the laboratory reading the sample.

What is Colposcopy?

A colposcopy is a detailed examination of the lower genital tract and it is recommended when a CST is abnormal or for specific symptoms. A colposcopy uses a special instrument called a colposcope to provide a magnified view of the cervix. A speculum is placed in the vagina and the Health Practitioner will look at the cervix through the colposcope to view the cervix.

A small amount of medical grade vinegar (acetic acid) is placed on the cervix followed by brown liquid called iodine. The vinegar and iodine highlight changes occurring in the cervix.

Small biopsies (tissue samples) of the cervix may be taken during the colposcopy procedure. Light bleeding and vaginal discharge is common after cervical biopsies. Your health practitioner may advise you to avoid inserting anything into the vagina for 48 hours after a colposcopy.

What can I do to protect myself from cervical cancer?

The best way to protect yourself from cervical cancer is to have a cervical screening test (CST) when it is due.

Smoking increases your risk of developing cervical cancer, as well as many other serious health conditions. It is recommended that you avoid smoking or stop smoking.

The current HPV vaccine protects women and men from acquiring seven of the fifteen oncogenic HPV types, (including HPV 16 and HPV 18), as well as the two low risk HPV types that cause genital warts (HPV 6 and HPV 11). Women who have been vaccinated still require cervical screening tests, although their risk of developing cervical cancer is greatly reduced. More information regarding the HPV vaccine can be found on the Cancer Council's HPV Vaccine website:

www.hpvvaccine.org.au

Where can I find more information on Cervical Screening?

If you wish to ask any questions, please feel free to contact a True Clinic and ask to speak with a Nurse. You can also find more information on Cervical Screening Test results and abnormalities from the National Cervical Screening Program, telephone 131 556 or visit www.cancerscreening.gov.au/cervical