

## Why you should have Cervical Screening at True

### What is Cervical Screening?

From 1<sup>st</sup> December 2017, the Cervical Screening Test replaced the Pap smear. Cervical screening looks for a common virus named HPV (humanpapilloma virus) which may cause cells in the cervix (the neck of the uterus or womb) to change and become abnormal. Women who have a negative HPV test are at very low risk of developing cervical cancer, even lower than women who have previously had a negative Pap smear test.

### How do you get HPV?

There are about 40 types of HPV that can affect the genital area. Up to 80% of people who have had any kind of sexual activity involving skin to skin genital contact will be infected with at least one type of HPV at some time. Usually this does not lead to any symptoms and most HPV infections are cleared by the body's immune system. HPV infection may persist and cause cervical cancer. On average this takes 10-15 years to develop from abnormal cells if left undetected and/or untreated.

### When should I start cervical screening?

All women between the ages of 25- 74 years old that have ever been sexually active should have a cervical screening test every 5 years or as recommended.

Women who have previously had Pap smears should have their first Cervical Screening Test when they are next due (this will be two years after having their last Pap for those women with a normal screening history).

Women who are under 25 but have already started having Pap smears, and whose results are all normal may not be due to have a Cervical Screening Test until they're 25.

Women vaccinated against HPV still need to have regular Cervical Screening. The vaccine protects against some high risk types of HPV but does not protect against all of

them. It is still possible to get changes in the cells of the cervix even if you are fully vaccinated.

### How is a Cervical Screening Test collected?

To collect the test you will need be examined by a nurse or a doctor. True clinicians are all female and very experienced in cervical screening. A plastic speculum is gently inserted into the vagina so that the cervix is seen and a sample is collected using a small brush. This sample is then transferred into a liquid for testing at the laboratory.

### How do I receive my results?

It is very important that you provide current contact details including your phone number, email and postal address. If for some reason you cannot receive your results by post or email please discuss an alternative method of contact with your clinician. You may also request that a copy of your result is forwarded to your GP.

It is necessary that you receive the result of your cervical screening even if it is normal. Never assume your result is normal if you haven't heard from the clinic. If you have not received your result 4-6 weeks after your consultation, please contact the clinic and ask to speak to a nurse.

### How will I know when my next test is due?

The National Cancer Screening Register (NCSR) will send out invitations to screen when you are due so it's important to keep your contact details up to date with the register. True will only contact those women requiring recall for follow up after an abnormal screening test.

### Do I still need to have Cervical Screening if I am no longer sexually active?

Yes. Screening is recommended for all women who have **ever** been sexually active regardless of how often or how recently they have had **any** kind of sexual activity.

### How much will the test cost?

Medicare covers the actual cost of your Cervical Screening Test however a small out of pocket fee may be required to cover the collection of the test by the nurse or doctor.

### How can I protect myself from HPV?

Immunisation against HPV is recommended as part of the School Based HPV Vaccination Program. Vaccination may also be recommended for older women who are unimmunised or did not complete the recommended course of vaccine doses at school.

The vaccine protects against infection with the types of HPV which cause more than 70% of cases of cervical cancer. The vaccine will not prevent all types of HPV that cause cervical cancer.

Other ways of lowering your risk of cervical cancer include using condoms, which will reduce the likely transmission of HPV, and giving up cigarette smoking. Smokers are less likely to clear HPV infection when compared to women who have never smoked.

### Where can I get more information on Cervical Screening?

If you wish to ask any questions please feel free to contact a True clinic and ask to speak to a nurse. You can also find more information on cervical screening and screening abnormalities from the National Cervical Screening Program, telephone 13 15 56 or visit [www.cervicalscreen.health.gov.au](http://www.cervicalscreen.health.gov.au)

#### Disclaimer -

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