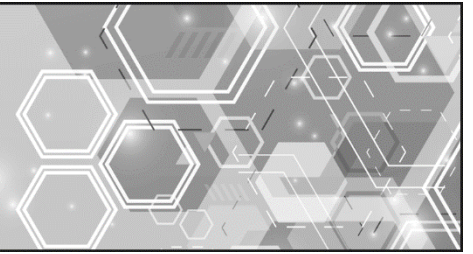




## Durham Region Health Department **Facts about...**



# Pap Test

## 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?

- Individuals with a cervix (women, transmasculine and nonbinary), who are or have been sexually active and are between the ages of 25 to 69 should have regular Pap tests.
- Sexual activity includes intercourse, as well as digital or oral sexual activity with a partner, involving the genital area.
- Those who have a normal Pap test result should continue having a Pap test once every three years to screen for cervical cancer.
- Cancer Care Ontario will send a reminder letter to all individuals after they initiate their first Pap test, to inform them of when their next Pap test is due.
- You can stop having Pap tests at age 70 if you have had 3 or more negative Pap tests in the previous ten years.
- Immunocompromised individuals should speak to their healthcare provider about how often they should have Pap testing done.

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905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 | [durham.ca/health](https://durham.ca/health)

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 do the results mean?

- A Pap result may be described as normal or abnormal.
- A normal result means that no abnormal or cancerous cells were found.
- Abnormal results mean that some abnormal cell growth was found on the sample. Sometimes abnormal cells can return to normal on their own.
- Some abnormal cells can indicate precancerous changes of the cervix, and over time they can develop into cancer if they are left untreated.

May 3, 2023

