



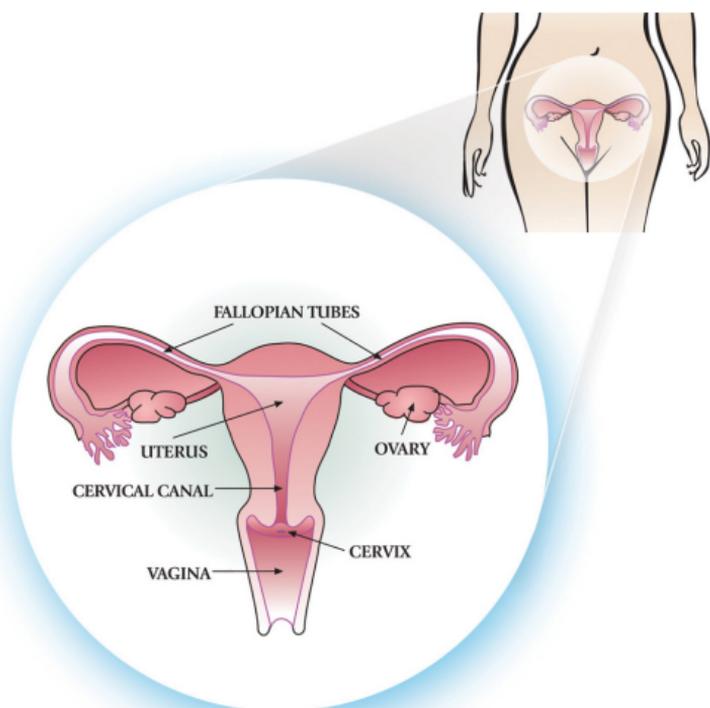
What you need to  
know about preventing  
cervical cancer

## What is cervical cancer?

Sometimes abnormal cell changes can develop on the cervix. If these abnormal cell changes do not go away on their own, over time, and if left untreated, they can turn into cancer.

## What is the cervix?

The cervix is the bottom part of the uterus, found at the top of the vagina.



## What causes cervical cancer?

Cervical cancer is caused by human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV:

- ▶ is a common sexually transmitted virus.
- ▶ can cause genital warts.
- ▶ usually has no signs or symptoms.
- ▶ can cause abnormal cell changes which can lead to cervical cancer.
- ▶ can cause cancer of the vagina, vulva, penis, anus, mouth and throat.
- ▶ infections usually disappear on their own. Only a small number of HPV infections will develop into cancer.

## Am I at risk for HPV?

If you have ever had sexual contact, you are at risk for an HPV infection. HPV passes from person-to-person through current or past sexual contact (including sexual abuse).

Sexual contact includes:

- ▶ oral, genital or rectal skin-to-skin contact, or
- ▶ sex with sex toys.

HPV can pass to and from people of all genders.

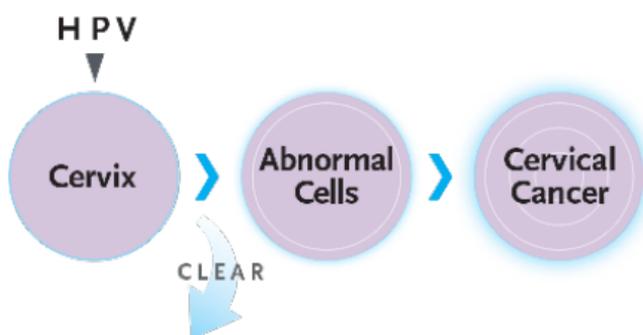
### QUICK FACTS

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- **Over 80%** of sexually active people will have an HPV infection during their lifetime.
- A recent study showed that **nearly half** of women got an HPV infection from their first sex partner.
- **90%** of HPV infections disappear on their own.
- The vast majority of people who get HPV **never** develop cancer.

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### HPV AND THE CERVIX



When the cervix is exposed to HPV, abnormal cell changes may develop on the cervix. Most often, these abnormal cell changes go away on their own. If the abnormal cells do not go away, over time, and if left untreated, they can lead to cancer.

# What can I do to lower my risk for cervical cancer?

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## Get checked with regular Pap tests

A Pap test can find abnormal changes on the cervix before they turn into cancer. During a Pap test, cells are taken from your cervix, placed in liquid, and sent to a lab. In most cases, the test result is normal. If your Pap test result is abnormal, you may need a repeat Pap test, or colposcopy.

Regular Pap tests with follow-up for abnormal changes can prevent most cancer of the cervix.

### Who should get checked?

Most women age 21-69, who have ever been sexually active should have a regular Pap test every 3 years. Transgender males and females may also need regular Pap tests.

Should I get checked if:	Yes	No
I have never had sexual contact?		✓
I have only had one sexual partner?	✓	
I am a lesbian or a woman who has had sex with women?	✓	
I am post-menopausal?	✓	
I have no family history of cervical cancer?	✓	
I have had a hysterectomy but I still have my cervix?	✓	
I am under 21?		✓
I have had the HPV vaccine?	✓	
I am a trans male who has a cervix?	✓	
I am a trans female who has had bottom surgery to create a cervix?	✓	

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### **Why every 3 years?**

Having a Pap test every year or two offers very little added benefit over having a Pap test every three years and can expose women to unnecessary harms including:

- ▶ discomfort or bleeding from the test,
- ▶ anxiety from abnormal test results,
- ▶ over-diagnosis of abnormal cell changes that would go away on their own, and
- ▶ problems with future pregnancies from some treatments during colposcopy.

### **How do I get checked?**

1. Ask your regular healthcare provider or contact your local health centre, or
2. Contact CervixCheck to find a Pap test clinic in your area.

The Pap test is free for Manitoba residents. Bring your Manitoba Health card to your appointment.

## 2

## Get vaccinated against HPV

The HPV vaccine provides protection against certain types of HPV that can cause genital warts and cervical cancer. HPV can also cause cancers of the mouth, throat, anus, vulva, vagina and penis. If an HPV vaccine is received before sexual contact, it is almost 100% effective in preventing infection (see table). Studies show that the HPV vaccine can benefit those who have already been sexually active.

### Three HPV vaccines have been approved for use in Canada.

VACCINE TYPE	PROTECTS AGAINST
<b>Gardasil-9</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 90% of cervical cancers</li><li>• 90% of genital warts</li></ul> <p>HPV TYPES COVERED</p> <p>6 11 16 18 31 33 45 52 58</p>
<b>Gardasil-4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Over 70% of cervical cancers</li><li>• 90% of genital warts</li></ul> <p>HPV TYPES COVERED</p> <p>6 11 16 18</p>
<b>Cervarix</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Over 70% of cervical cancers</li></ul> <p>HPV TYPES COVERED</p> <p>16 18</p>

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## **Are the vaccines safe?**

Yes, the vaccines are safe. Health Canada has approved all three vaccines based on a scientific review of their quality, safety and effectiveness.

## **HPV VACCINE BENEFITS**

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- ▶ The vaccine protects against high-risk HPV types that are responsible for up to 90% of cervical cancers.
- ▶ Gardasil-4 and Gardasil-9 protect against HPV types which cause 90% of anal and genital warts.
- ▶ The vaccines protect against other HPV-related cancers and their precursors.
- ▶ The vaccines are safe and well tolerated.
- ▶ The vaccines do not cause HPV infection.
- ▶ Serious side effects are rare.

## **HPV VACCINE LIMITATIONS**

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- ▶ The vaccines do not protect against all high-risk HPV types that can cause cancer.
- ▶ The vaccines do not treat existing HPV infections.
- ▶ The most common side effects are soreness, pain and swelling at the injection site.

## How can I get the vaccine?

There are two ways to access the vaccine:

**A**

Females and males in the Manitoba HPV Immunization Program can access the vaccine at no cost through the school-based program in Grade 6, their regular healthcare provider, or a pharmacist.

To learn more about the eligibility criteria for the Manitoba HPV Immunization Program, visit the Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living website.

**B**

Females and males **not** in the Manitoba HPV Immunization Program can access the vaccine through their healthcare provider, public health nurse or pharmacist. A prescription is needed.

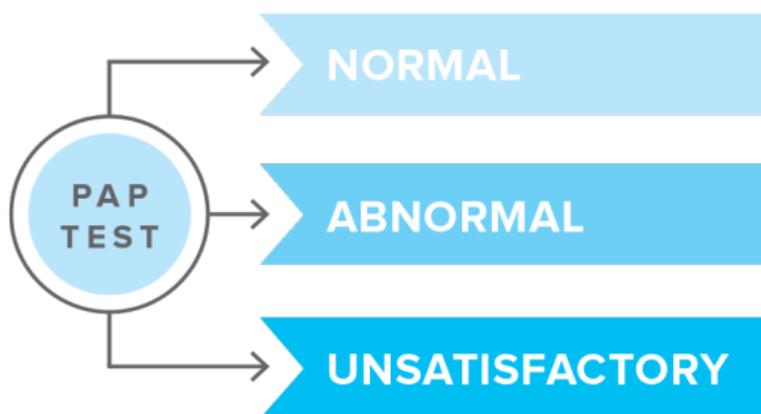
The vaccine may be given in two or three doses. Talk to your healthcare provider to determine the dosing schedule that is right for you.

### **Do I still need Pap tests if I have had the vaccine?**

Yes, because the HPV vaccines do not protect you against all types of HPV that can cause cervical cancer.

## What can I expect after my Pap test?

Contact your healthcare provider or CervixCheck for your Pap test result. Results are usually ready within 2-3 weeks of your Pap test. You can expect one of three possible test results:



Return to your healthcare provider anytime you have abnormal vaginal bleeding (bleeding after menopause, persistent bleeding between periods or with sex) or abnormal vaginal discharge.

Most Pap test results are normal (negative for intraepithelial lesion or malignancy). If you do have an abnormal Pap test result, know that:

One in four women has an abnormal Pap test result in her lifetime.



About one in 10 Pap tests are abnormal.



In most cases, cancer is not the reason for an abnormal Pap test.



Women who have had previous abnormal Pap test results or cervical cancer can still benefit from the HPV vaccine.

RESULT	WHAT IT MEANS
<b>Negative for intraepithelial lesion or malignancy</b> (Normal)	No abnormal changes were seen.
<b>Unsatisfactory for evaluation</b>	Sometimes there is a problem looking at the cells from your Pap test. This may be because not enough cells were taken, or there was too much blood mixed in with the cells.
<b>Organisms reactive/repair</b>	You probably have an infection or irritation to your cervix.
<b>ASC-US</b> (Atypical squamous cells of undetermined significance)	Abnormal changes were seen and cannot clearly be identified.
<b>LSIL</b> (Low-grade squamous intraepithelial lesion)	Mild abnormal changes were seen.
<b>Benign endometrial cells</b>	If you are under 45 years of age: Cells from your uterus were found.
	If you are 45 years of age or older: Cells from your uterus were found and they may be abnormal.
<b>Atypical endometrial cells</b>	Abnormal cells from your uterus were found.
<b>Atypical endocervical cells</b>	There may be abnormal changes.
<b>ASC-H</b> (Atypical squamous cells - cannot rule out high grade squamous intraepithelial lesion, HSIL)	Abnormal changes were seen and they may be HSIL.
<b>HSIL</b> (High grade squamous intraepithelial lesion)	Moderate to severe abnormal changes were seen. This result is more serious.
<b>AGC</b> (Atypical glandular cells)	There may be abnormal changes.
<b>Carcinoma</b>	You may have cancer.

## WHAT YOU SHOULD DO

Have Pap tests every 3 years.

Book an appointment for a repeat Pap test in 3 months.

Talk with your healthcare provider about tests for sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Book an appointment for a repeat Pap test in 6 months.

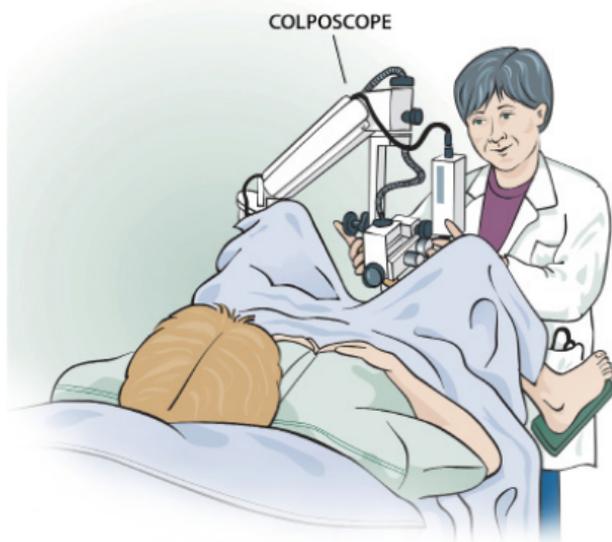
If your repeat Pap test result is abnormal, make sure your healthcare provider makes a colposcopy appointment for you.

Continue with regular Pap tests. Talk with your healthcare provider if you have abnormal bleeding from your vagina.

If you are past menopause and/or have abnormal bleeding from your vagina, make sure your healthcare provider refers you for a biopsy of your uterus.

Make sure your healthcare provider refers you for a biopsy of your uterus.

Make sure your healthcare provider has made a colposcopy appointment for you.



## What is a colposcopy?

A colposcopy examines the cervix and vagina using a low-powered magnifying instrument known as a colposcope. A gynecologist who is specially trained as a colposcopist does this examination.

If you are pregnant, it is safe to have a colposcopy.

### Why is it done?

The colposcopy will look for abnormalities on your cervix. The doctor can then decide if any treatment is necessary.

Tell the nurse or doctor if you are allergic to iodine or shellfish.

### What happens?

The process is like the Pap test.

1. You lie down on the exam table and put your feet in supports.
2. A speculum is used to open the vagina so the cervix can be seen.
3. Using the colposcope, the doctor looks closely at the cervix. The colposcope stays outside of the body.
4. A tissue sample (biopsy) may be taken to see if treatment is needed.

## What is a biopsy?

A biopsy removes a tissue sample. The sample is sent to the laboratory.

### What happens?

The doctor will remove the sample during the colposcopy. The sample is smaller than a 1/4 of the size of a pencil eraser. It is gently removed with an instrument like a pair of tweezers.

### Will it hurt?

A biopsy usually takes less than a minute. Some women feel nothing. Others describe a pinching feeling or cramps. This usually stops within a few minutes. Your doctor may suggest a pain reliever.

### Are there any after-effects?

You may have spotting for a few days. If so, use pads, not tampons.

For at least two days after your biopsy, do **not**:

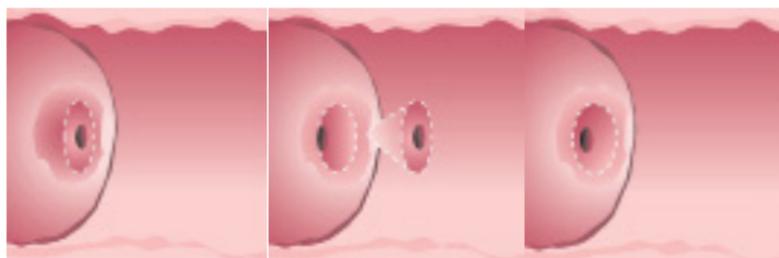
- ▶ Douche
- ▶ Have sexual intercourse
- ▶ Use tampons

## What types of treatment exist?

### Cone Biopsy

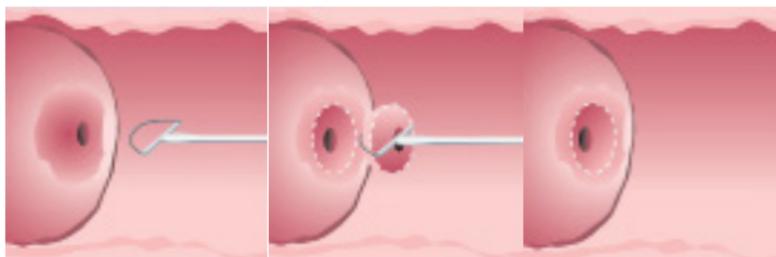
A cone biopsy removes a cone shaped piece of tissue.

It is done as a day surgery procedure and requires anesthetic. If cancer cells have been found, it will also determine whether or not these cells have spread to other tissues.



## LEEP

LEEP is short for loop electrosurgical excision procedure. After freezing the area with local anesthetic, an electrical wire loop is inserted into the opening of the cervix and the abnormal tissue is removed.



## Cryosurgery

Cryosurgery is an uncommon treatment that uses extreme cold to destroy abnormal tissue on the cervix.

In cryosurgery, a probe is placed against the cervix for a number of minutes. Though not painful, the sensation felt can be described as heavy and cramping will occur. Following the procedure, you may have watery discharge for two to three weeks.

## Laser Surgery

Laser surgery is a treatment that uses an intense, narrow beam of light (called a laser beam) to remove abnormal cervical cells. A local anesthetic is used. A watery discharge is a common side effect that may last up to two weeks.

## DID YOU KNOW?

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You can request your Pap test results from CervixCheck online at:  
<https://www.cancercare.mb.ca/screening/cervix>



### **Privacy & Personal Health Information**

CancerCare Manitoba collects personal health information in order to administer the BreastCheck, ColonCheck, and CervixCheck cancer screening programs. Personal health information is provided to CancerCare Manitoba by Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living (MHSAL), by healthcare agencies, and/or by healthcare facilities, as authorized by clause 22(2)(g) of The Personal Health Information Act (PHIA). Personal health information may be used by CancerCare Manitoba to invite Manitobans to be screened for cancer, remind individuals and their primary care providers when individuals are due for screening or follow-up, advise people or their healthcare provider of test results, and conduct quality assurance and performance monitoring of the cancer screening programs. All personal health information is collected, used, disclosed and retained in a secure manner. If you have any questions regarding the collection, use, disclosure or storage of your personal health information by CancerCare Manitoba for the purposes of these programs, contact the CancerCare Manitoba Privacy Officer at [CCMBPrivacyOffice@cancercare.mb.ca](mailto:CCMBPrivacyOffice@cancercare.mb.ca) or the MHSAL Legislative Unit at 204-788-6612.

### **Contact us:**

- to find out where you can go for a Pap test
- for a copy of your Pap test results
- for information about your results, Pap tests and cervical cancer

### **Where can I find more information?**

[cancercare.mb.ca/screening](http://cancercare.mb.ca/screening)

Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living

National Advisory Committee on Immunization

[hpvinfo.ca](http://hpvinfo.ca)



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