How can I reduce my risk of cervical cancer?

- Get regular cervical cancer screenings.
- Get any follow-up procedures that are recommended by your health care provider if you had an abnormal Pap test or HPV test.
- Do not smoke. If you need help quitting, contact NDQuits at 1.800.QUIT.NOW or go to www.ndhealth.gov/ndquits.
- The surest way to avoid getting HPV, which is the major cause of cervical cancer, is by refraining from sexual activity.
- If you do have sex, limit the number of your sexual partners, and always use a condom.
- HPV vaccines are available for males and females ages 9 to 26 that can help protect against the two main types of HPV that cause cervical cancer.
- Women who have received the HPV vaccine still need to get regular cervical cancer screenings.

What do I do if I cannot afford to pay for a Pap test or HPV test?

- Women's Way may provide a way to pay for Pap tests and HPV tests. Call 1-800-449-6636 or 701-328-2367 or visit www.ndhealth.gov/womensway to see if you are eligible.

For more information, contact:

Women's Way
Division of Community & Health Systems
North Dakota Department of Health
600 E. Boulevard Ave., Dept. 301
Bismarck, N.D. 58505-0200
1-800-280-5512 or 701-328-2367
www.ndhealth.gov/womensway

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Taking Care of You

Rita H.
Rural Cannon Ball, N.D.

Information About HPV and Pap Tests

Linda A.
Cervical Cancer Survivor
Surrey, N.D.
What is a Pap test?

- A Pap test checks the cells of the cervix (the opening of the uterus) for changes that could lead to cancer.
- During a pelvic exam, a health care provider inserts a special tool (speculum) into the vagina and collects some cells from the cervix with a swab or brush.

Why is a Pap test and HPV test important?

- Regular Pap tests and/or HPV tests and treatment, when needed, can prevent most cancers of the cervix.
- Women under the age of 30 do not need an HPV test unless the Pap test is abnormal.
- Women who have cancer of the cervix may not have any symptoms.
- If cancer or precancer develops, it can be found early and treated.

When should I have my first Pap test?

- Women should start having regular Pap tests at age 21.

How often should I get a Pap test and HPV test?

- Women ages 21 to 29 should get a Pap test every three years. You do not need an HPV test unless you have an abnormal Pap test result.
- Women ages 30 to 65 should get a Pap test and HPV test every five years, or an HPV test only every five years, or a Pap test only every three years.
- Women older than 65 should ask their health care provider when to stop having Pap tests.
- Some women need to be tested more often. Talk to your health care provider to find out what's right for you.

How will I know what my test results are?

- Your health care provider will contact you with the results. Some health care providers only contact patients if the results are abnormal.

What is the human papillomavirus (HPV)?

- HPV is a virus passed from the skin of one person to another during sex. Though usually harmless, some HPV types can slowly lead to cervical cancer if not treated.
- HPVs are the major cause of cervical cancer.

What is an HPV test?

- An HPV test checks your cervix for the virus that can cause abnormal cells and cervical cancer.
- The HPV test can be done at the same time as a Pap test from the same swab, or an HPV test can be done alone without a Pap test.

How often should I get a Pap test and HPV test?

- Women ages 21 to 29 should get a Pap test every three years. You do not need an HPV test unless you have an abnormal Pap test result.
- Women ages 30 to 65 should get a Pap test and HPV test every five years, or an HPV test only every five years, or a Pap test only every three years.
- Women older than 65 should ask their health care provider when to stop having Pap tests.
- Some women need to be tested more often. Talk to your health care provider to find out what's right for you.

What if I have questions about my Pap test or HPV test?

- Talk to your health care provider. Don't be afraid to ask questions.