

ENGAGEMENT

Blog – Physical health: Cervical Cancer

The following blog has been prepared by TAL. It is available to use in white-label format for communications and is designed to provide information on positive ways to support physical health.

-BLOG-

It's time for a checkup

Cervical cancer is the fourth most common cancer in women worldwide. In Australia, about 1,030 women are expected to be diagnosed with cervical cancer in 2024, and sadly, around 243 women will die from the disease.¹

What is cervical cancer?

Cervical cancer begins when abnormal cells in the lining of the cervix grow uncontrollably. It may then spread to other parts of the reproductive system or to other parts of the body.

There are often no symptoms in the early stages of the disease. Later symptoms may include vaginal bleeding, unusual discharges or lower back and pelvic pain. Virtually all cases of cervical cancer are associated with human papillomavirus (HPV) infection.²

Why is screening so important?

The good news is, when detected early, cervical cancer has an excellent prognosis. In low and lower-income countries, the human papillomavirus (HPV) is responsible for 30% of cancer cases, however in developed countries, such as Australia, the use of cervical cancer screening programs has led to a dramatic decrease in the rates of cervical cancer.³ The National Cervical Screening Program aims to detect precancerous abnormalities in people without symptoms, so reducing the illness and deaths caused as a result of the disease. Since the program's introduction in 1991, the incidence of cervical cancer has halved.²

Changes to screening

If you haven't had a screening procedure for a while, you may find that the process has changed since your last test. Two-yearly Pap tests have now been replaced by five-yearly Cervical Screening Tests (CST). A CST looks for HPV, the virus known to cause almost all cervical cancers.

You should have the CST if you are a woman or person with a cervix and are aged between 25 and 74 years.

What to expect

¹ Australian Government. (2024). *Cervical cancer in Australia statistics*

² Cancer Council Australia. (2023). *Understanding Cervical Cancer booklet*

³ World Health Organization. (2025). *Cancer*

Cervical screening is done through healthcare providers in a range of centres and clinics across Australia. There are two options for the CST:

- You can collect your own sample using a simple swab
- Your healthcare provider can collect a sample

Both options are safe and accurate at detecting HPV.

Those who would prefer a health professional to do their test are able to request this. After your test, the sample will go to a lab for checking and the results are sent to both your nominated health care provider as well as the [National Cancer Screening Register](#) which stores electronic records for each person who has undergone cervical screening. The National Cancer Screening Register will also send reminders when you are due for your next CST.

HPV vaccination

One of the best ways to prevent cervical cancer is through an [HPV vaccination](#). The vaccination prevents infection with the most common cancer-causing strains of HPV. It's most effective if given to individuals under the age of 15 with two doses, at least 6 months apart. Speak with your doctor if you'd like information about the HPV vaccine as an adult.

Want to find out more?

If you are due for a test or would like more information, speak with your doctor or contact the [National Cervical Screening program](#).

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