

6 TIPS

women should know about pap tests

1

A physician or other health care provider performs a pap test by taking a sample of cells in the cervix (the opening between the vagina and uterus) with a brush. These cells are then examined under a microscope for changes that could turn into cancer if left untreated.

2

A pap test is different than a pelvic exam. When a physician or health care provider performs a pelvic exam, one finger is placed in the vagina and the internal reproductive organs (vagina, cervix, fallopian tubes, vulva, ovaries and uterus) are examined externally with the provider's other hand.

3

If you are a woman under age 21, you do not need a pap test even if you're sexually active. Abnormal cells in young women typically return to normal without treatment.

4

If you are a woman age 21 to 65, you should have a pap test with or without a human papilloma virus (HPV) test based on your age, medical history and risks.

5

To obtain birth control pills, you do need to meet with your doctor to renew your health history and discuss potential side effects, but you do not need a pelvic exam or pap test.

6

Share your personal health history and family health history with your doctor to ensure appropriate testing. Your provider can help advise you on the recommended schedule of pap/HPV tests based on your age, medical and family history, and other risk factors. Follow your doctor's advice regarding pap tests if you have risk factors for cervical cancer.

If you are experiencing any unusual symptoms or have questions about pap or HPV tests, cervical cancer screenings or any medical condition, talk to your doctor.

This health alert is brought to you by:



Source: ChoosingWisely.org; American Academy of Family Physicians, American Cancer Society, American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology

These items are provided solely for informational purposes and are not intended as a substitute for consultation with a medical professional. Patients with any specific questions about the items on this list or their individual health should consult their physician.

