



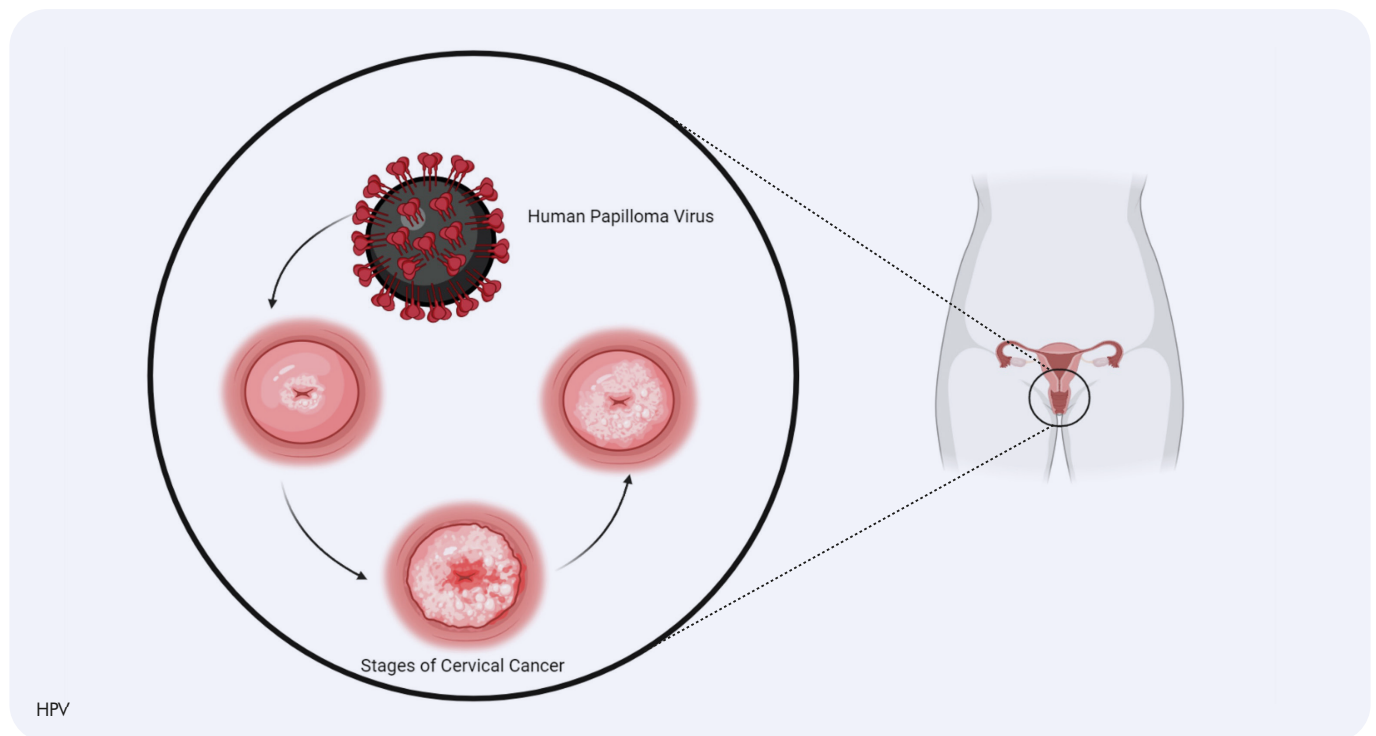
PATHOLOGY TESTS EXPLAINED

Information about pathology tests to help everyone take control of their health and make the right decisions about their care.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT **SCREENING FOR CERVICAL CANCER**

Cervical cancer is caused by the human papilloma virus – HPV. The virus infection is very common in both men and women, especially in people who are sexually active. Although it causes few symptoms and usually clears up naturally — just as the body recovers from cold and flu viruses – a few of the more than 100 types of the HP virus have the potential to cause cancer. HPV infection can lead to cancer of the cervix as well as oral, anal, and penile cancers.

The HPV test is used to detect these high-risk strains of HPV and if it shows that you have one of them, your sample will go on to be examined under the microscope to look for pre-cancerous changes or cancer. The results of this test will decide whether you need to be monitored or actively investigated.



HPV



What to expect when you have HPV testing

A sample of cells is taken from the cervical area during a pelvic examination, using a type of spatula, swab, or brush. The cells are transferred to a special preservative liquid and are transported to the laboratory for HPV testing.

The high level of accuracy of the test means that women between the ages of 25-75 only need to repeat the HPV test every five years after their initial test. You can choose to have a cervical screening test either by:

- taking your own sample from your vagina, using a simple swab (self-collection) or
- having a healthcare provider collect your sample from the cervix using a speculum.

Both options are covered by Medicare. If you decide to collect your own vaginal sample, you will be provided with a swab by your healthcare provider and instructions on how to collect the sample. You will be able to collect your sample in a private space. The sample is then sent to the laboratory where a genetic test is performed to detect the DNA of high-risk strains of HPV.

Which HPV strains are high risk?

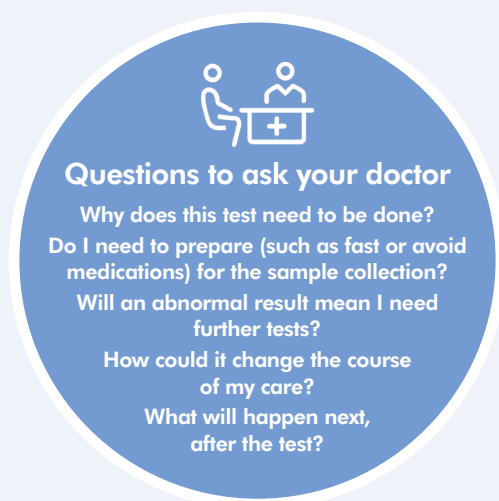
- HPV types 6 and 11 typically cause venereal warts, but (along with types 42, 43, and 44) have a low risk of progressing to cancer.
- HPV types 16, 18, 31, 33, 35, 39, 45, 51, 52, 56, 58, 59, 68, 73 and 82 have a higher risk of progressing to cancer. HPV types 16 and 18 are associated with about 70 per cent of all cervical cancers.

If the test detects high-risk HPV virus, your sample will be sent to another department in the laboratory where a cytologist, a pathologist with special training in cervical cancer, will investigate it under the microscope to see whether your cervical cells are changing and becoming precancerous.



What your results can tell you

<p>Low risk</p> <p>HPV has not been detected</p>	<p>You will be invited to have another test in five years.</p> <p>You cannot be considered at no risk because it's possible to pick up an HPV infection in the following five years.</p>
<p>Intermediate risk</p> <p>You do not have the highest risk HPV types 16 or 18 but you have another higher risk type. Your sample will have been examined in the laboratory for cell changes and found to have no cell changes or only minor – low grade – cell changes.</p>	<p>You will be asked to return in 12 months.</p> <p>With an intermediate risk result you are not considered to need treatment.</p>
<p>Higher risk</p> <p>Your test results show either HPV infection with types 16 and/or 18. HPV types 16 and 18 are associated with about 70% of cervical cancers.</p> <p>Or you may have high grade cell changes on your cervix, or persistent infection with one of the other high-risk HPV types.</p>	<p>It is important that you are referred to a specialist for a colposcopy to investigate further.</p>
<p>Unsatisfactory</p> <p>An unsatisfactory test result occurs when the sample cannot be properly examined.</p>	<p>This may mean the sample hasn't been collected adequately. It does not mean there is an abnormality or a positive result.</p>



For more detailed information on these and many other tests go to pathologytestsexplained.org.au



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www.pathologytestsexplained.org.au

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