

Pap Test

Schedule your test for a time when you will not be having your menstrual period. If you're menstruating at the time of your appointment, call your healthcare provider to ask if you should reschedule.

For 48 hours before the test

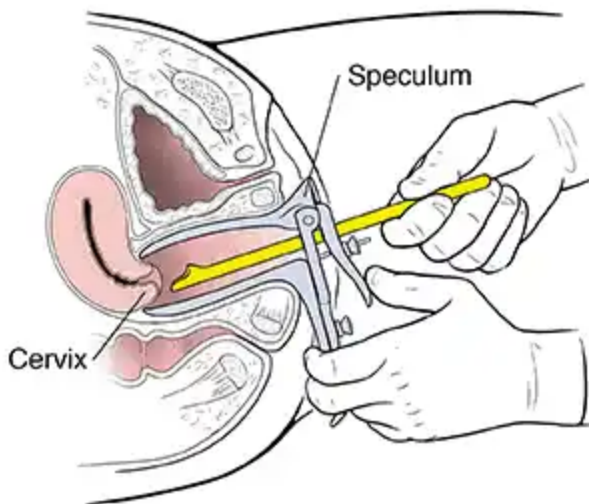
- Don't douche.
- Don't use vaginal medicines, creams, or spermicides.

For 24 hours before the test

- Don't have sex.

How the test is done

1. You lie on an exam table with your feet in stirrups (foot rests). This is the usual position for a pelvic exam (an exam of the reproductive organs).
2. Your healthcare provider uses a speculum (a metal or plastic instrument) to gently open the vagina.
3. Cells are taken from the cervix with a small spatula or rubber broom. A small brush may then be used to remove cells from inside the cervical canal. You may feel pressure or slight discomfort.



A speculum is used to open the vagina so cells can be taken from the cervix.

Preserving the sample

There are 2 ways to preserve the sample after it is taken:

- **Traditional preservation.** With this method, the sample is smeared directly onto a glass microscope slide. The sample is then sent to a lab to be analyzed.
- **Liquid-based preservation.** The sample is placed in a special preservative solution. At the lab, cervical cells are separated from blood and mucous cells and spread onto a slide. Screening for human papillomavirus (HPV) can also be done using the same sample.

After the test

You're free to go! There is a slight chance of light bleeding or spotting. Your healthcare provider will tell you when to expect your test results.

Getting your results

Ask your healthcare provider how you will receive your results. You should always obtain and understand results of any testing you have done. These may be obtained by phone, mail, or through online access if available:

- **Normal result.** The cells in the sample appear healthy. Have your next Pap test as recommended by your healthcare provider.
- **Abnormal result.** The lab saw something unusual in your sample. Talk with your healthcare provider about what the results mean. You may need to repeat the Pap test or have other tests to evaluate the problem.

© 2000-2022 The StayWell Company, LLC. All rights reserved. This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Always follow your healthcare professional's instructions.