

Pre-Procedure Guide for Pap Smear

What Is a Pap Smear?

A Pap smear is a test that is done to detect abnormalities in the cells on your cervix.

Your cervix is the lower portion of your uterus. The cervix forms the opening of your uterus and extends into your vagina. The vagina is the muscular passage-way that leads from your uterus to the outside of your body.

A Pap smear is a highly effective means of detecting precancerous and cancerous changes on the cervix before you experience symptoms of disease. The Pap smear can also detect changes in cervical cells that may indicate the presence of inflammation or infection with a sexually transmitted disease.

How Do I Prepare for a Pap Smear?

A Pap smear can be performed in your family doctor or gynecologist's office or in a women's health clinic.

If you are having your period on the day your Pap smear is to be taken, your doctor will still be able to do the procedure, but the technologists may have difficulty obtaining a clear reading from your Pap smear, and you may have to have a repeat test.

Don't douche or use birth control foams or jellies, other vaginal creams, or tampons for 24 to 48 hours before you have a Pap smear. Your doctor also may advise you to avoid sexual intercourse for 24 to 48 hours before the Pap smear.

The Pap smear procedure may be more comfortable if you go to the bathroom right before it starts.

How Is a Pap Smear Done?

During the procedure, you will lie on your back on an exam table with your feet in footrests and your knees spread apart.

Before starting the procedure, your health professional (doctor or nurse practitioner) will examine your genital area for sores, signs of inflammation, and

other problems. Then your health professional will gently insert a slender instrument called a speculum into your vagina. The speculum looks like a duck's bill. Once the speculum is in your vagina, your health professional will spread apart the two parts of the speculum's "bill" to hold open the walls of your vagina. This will enable your health professional to see your cervix.

Using a small, sterile brush, your health professional will obtain a sample of cells from inside the opening of your cervix. Then your health professional will gently scrape the outside of your cervix with a small wooden spatula to obtain cells from that area. The cell samples will then be spread on glass slides or placed in special transport tubes.

Once your health professional has obtained the cells from your cervix, he or she will remove the speculum from your vagina.

What Happens After the Procedure?

You may resume your normal activities as soon as the Pap smear procedure is completed. It is possible that you will experience spotting (vaginal bleeding that is not related to your period) for a day or two after having a Pap smear, although most women experience no aftereffects at all.

The cell samples from your cervix will be sent to DIANON Systems, where a specialist called a cytotechnologist will examine the cells under a microscope. If any abnormal cells are found, a pathologist will then examine your cervical cells.

The pathologist will classify any abnormal cells found on your Pap smear and report this information to your doctor. Your doctor will use this information to determine whether you will need additional testing or treatment.

All of us at DIANON Systems understand that you will be eager to know the results of your Pap smear, and we take every possible step to report our findings

to your doctor as quickly as possible—usually within a few days.

If your Pap smear was normal, you may not hear anything from your doctor. If abnormal cells were found in your Pap smear, your doctor will notify you

Meet Your Pathologist

Your pathologist is an important member of your health care team. A pathologist is a doctor who diagnoses diseases and health conditions by studying samples of tissue and body fluids. Your pathologist's findings will help your doctor understand your diagnosis, plan your treatment, and monitor your health as time goes by.



Your cervical tissue samples will be sent to DIANON Systems, where they will be analyzed by pathology experts who examine thousands of similar specimens each year. Your doctor knows that the report he or she receives from DIANON will be informative and accurate—which means you will have reliable information on which to base your health care decisions. Please visit our Web site at www.dianon.com for more information about DIANON Systems and the expert pathology services we provide.