

WHAT IS CERVICAL SCREENING?

A Cervical Screening Test is a simple health check for people who have a cervix. It is usually done when you feel well and don't have any unusual symptoms, like unexpected bleeding.

The test looks for HPV. Usually, the body clears HPV on its own. Sometimes it stays in the body and can cause changes in the cells of the cervix. Most of those changes are not cancer.

Cervical screening checks for changes and can find them early — long before you would notice anything yourself. If treatment is needed, it can usually be taken care of early, so it doesn't turn into something more serious.

HOW TO SCREEN

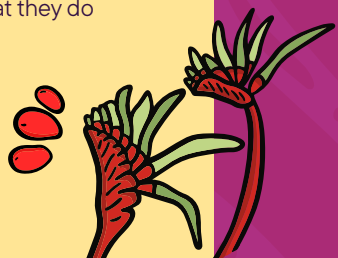
You can choose how you would like to do your cervical screening.

There are 2 options...

- **Screening with a healthcare worker** like a doctor, nurse or Aboriginal health worker (this is sometimes called a healthcare provider-collected test)
- **Self-collection** where you collect your own sample using a small, thin swab (this is sometimes also called a self-swab test)

Both options are safe and accurate ways to check for HPV, and both tests usually only take a few minutes.

If you're having any symptoms — like unusual bleeding — your healthcare worker might recommend that they do the test for you instead of self-collection.



ONE SMALL SWISH EVERY 5 YEARS COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE

If you're a woman, **sistergirl** or **brotherboy** with a cervix aged **25 to 74**, you can book your cervical screening wherever you usually go for your health business.

🔍 health.gov.au/cervical-screening



NATIONAL
CERVICAL
SCREENING
PROGRAM
A joint Australian, state and territory government program

We acknowledge the wisdom, resilience and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We especially honour the important role of women, girls, and people with a cervix in our communities — including mothers, aunties, sisters and cousins as leaders, caregivers and custodians of knowledge. From the ocean to the outback, we thank them for the essential role they play in our cultures.

Artwork and illustrations by proud Bundjalung and South Sea Islander woman Kimberly Engwicht.

IT'S AS EASY AS



1... 2... SWISH



If you're aged **25 to 74** and have a cervix, book your cervical screening and stop cancer before it starts.

THE SCREENING PROCESS

BEFORE SCREENING

You can book your screening wherever you usually go for your health care.

When you book, you can...

- Ask for a female doctor, nurse or health worker
- Ask about self-collection
- Ask any questions you have

There's nothing special you need to do to prepare. It can help to book your test when you're not having your period, but if you're unsure, your clinic can guide you.

If you feel nervous, that's normal. You can change your mind about how you want to screen when you arrive.

DURING SCREENING

What happens during screening depends on the option you choose.

If a doctor, nurse or health worker collects the sample...

You'll usually be asked to undress from the waist down. You lie on your back on a bed with your knees apart, and you can cover yourself with a sheet so you can stay as comfortable as possible.

The doctor, nurse or health worker gently places a small tool called a speculum into the vagina so they can see your cervix. They then use a soft brush to collect a small sample.

It might feel a little uncomfortable or unusual, but it shouldn't hurt. You can ask them to go slowly, explain what they are doing or stop at any time.

If you've had a difficult or uncomfortable experience before, you can let your health worker know. They can help make a plan that feels safer and more comfortable for you.

If you choose self-collection...

You'll collect your own sample using a small, thin swab that your healthcare worker will give you. You can ask questions or ask for instructions on how to do the test before you start.

You do the test in a private space, like a bathroom at the clinic. You place the swab into your vagina and swish it around for 10-20 seconds to collect a sample. It does not need to reach the cervix — there is a mark on the swab to show how far it needs to go.

When you're done, you return the swab to your healthcare worker. Both options usually only take a few minutes. You're in control the whole time.

AFTER SCREENING

Your sample is sent to a lab to be checked for HPV. Most people will receive a normal result, which means no HPV was found, and be invited to screen again in 5 years.

If HPV is found, it does not mean you have cancer. It just means the virus was picked up and your health worker may suggest some extra checks.

They will talk you through what happens next and support you along the way. You can always ask them questions.



YOU MIGHT BE THINKING...



Can I bring someone with me?

Yes. You can bring a support person with you if that makes you feel more comfortable. Let your clinic know when you book.



How long does it take?

The screening itself usually only takes a few minutes. Your appointment might take a little longer, so there's time to talk and ask questions.



When will I get my results?

Your sample is sent to a lab. Your clinic will let you know how and when you'll receive your results. If you're unsure, you can ask during your appointment.



What if I've had a bad experience before?

You can tell your health worker about your past experience if you feel comfortable sharing. They can help make a plan for doing your test that feels safer and more comfortable for you. You don't have to explain everything unless you want to. You can share as much or as little as you want.



Do I have to do it?

It's always your choice, but screening is recommended and important because it helps prevent cervical cancer. **It's 1 test every 5 years for peace of mind.** If you're not sure, talk to your health worker if there's anything you might want to know more about.