

CERVICAL CANCER IS ONE OF THE CANCERS WE CAN OFTEN STOP BEFORE IT STARTS

The HPV vaccine and regular screening both play a part in protecting your health. So even if you feel well, have finished having babies, or aren't sexually active right now, screening is still important. It's about looking after your health early and not waiting for something to feel wrong.

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, yarn with your health worker about cervical screening and choose what feels right for you.

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 STARTS WITH A SWISH



If you're aged 25 to 74 and have a cervix, yarn with your health worker about cervical screening.



WHAT IS CERVICAL CANCER?

Cervical cancer is a cancer that starts in the cells of the cervix. The cervix is a small part of your body just below the womb (uterus). Not everyone knows exactly where it is, and that's okay. Your health worker can explain it in a way that feels comfortable for you.

Cancer happens when cells grow in a way they shouldn't and form a lump or spread to other parts of the body. Cervical cancer usually develops slowly over many years. Before cancer forms, there are often small changes in the cervical cells. These changes do not usually cause pain or other signs at first, which is why screening is important.

Even when cervical cancer is found, if it's still early it can often be treated successfully.

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. If you are experiencing symptoms, your health worker might recommend a different type of check.



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.

WHAT IS HPV?

HPV stands for human papillomavirus. It's a very common virus — 4 out of 5 people will have HPV at some point in their lives.

HPV is usually passed on through intimate skin-to-skin contact. Most HPV infections show no symptoms and go away on their own. But if HPV stays in the body for a long time, it can sometimes cause changes to cells in the cervix, and these changes can sometimes turn into cancer.



The good news is there is a vaccine that protects against lots of common types of HPV that can cause cervical cancer.

It doesn't protect against every type of HPV though, which means screening still plays an important role in staying well. Even if you've had the HPV vaccine, cervical screening helps check everything is still okay.

If you're under 26 and haven't had the HPV vaccine, yarn with your health worker — it's one of the easiest ways to protect yourself.

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.



There is no “better” option — the best option is the one that feels right for you. Your clinic will support whichever option you choose.



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.

Either way, you can **yarn to your health worker**, and they can talk you through what's best for your situation.