Regular screening is the best way to protect yourself against cervical cancer. It is important to have regular Cervical Screening Tests. About 800 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer in Australia each year, and about 80% of these cases occur in women who have never screened or were not up-to-date with their screening.

Who should have a Cervical Screening Test?
Women aged 25 to 74 years who have ever been sexually active, including women who have been human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccinated should have a Cervical Screening Test every five years.

What is Self-collection?
Self-collection is when a woman collects her own sample for cervical screening. This is offered to women who are currently overdue for their cervical screening or have never screened before.

Am I eligible for Self-collection?
It is not recommended that all women collect their own sample. Your healthcare provider will discuss Self-collection and the Cervical Screening Test with you, to help you decide which collection method is the best option for you. Self-collection may be an option if you are 30 years old or over, and have either:
- never had a Cervical Screening Test (or Pap test) or
- are at least two years overdue for cervical screening.
Self-collection is not suitable if you are experiencing unusual bleeding, pain or discharge.
If you’re unsure about when you last had your screening test, talk to your healthcare provider.

How do I collect my own sample?
If you meet the criteria for Self-collection and have decided this is the best option for you, your healthcare provider will give you a Self-collection device and instructions on how to collect your sample. This sample can be collected in a private place.

Is a Self-collected sample as effective at preventing cervical cancer as a sample taken by my healthcare provider?
A Self-collected sample contains vaginal cells only (not cells from your cervix), and can be tested for HPV only.
A sample taken by a healthcare provider contains cervical cells. The cervical cells can be tested for HPV, and if HPV is found the same sample can be tested again to check if there are any abnormal cervical cells. A sample taken by a healthcare provider is most effective.
If HPV is found in your Self-collected sample, you may be referred to a specialist for further tests, or you will need to go back to your healthcare provider to have another sample collected by your healthcare provider. This sample will contain cells taken from your cervix (cervical cells) and will be tested to look for possible cell changes that might develop into cervical cancer. Your healthcare provider will talk to you about the next steps if cell changes are found.

It is important to see your healthcare provider immediately if you have any symptoms, such as abnormal vaginal bleeding, pain or discharge.