



Figure 1. Cervical screening collection.

How is the sample of cervical cells obtained?

This involves an internal vaginal examination, similar to the Pap test examination. A special instrument, a speculum, is inserted very gently into the vagina, so that your cervix can be seen and the cell sample obtained, most commonly using a soft brush (Figure 1). This examination should not be painful, but can be a little uncomfortable and embarrassing.

How is the Cervical Screening Test done?

A sample of cervical cells is obtained from the cervix and placed in liquid in a small container. In the laboratory, the cells are tested for the presence of HPV infection. If HPV is detected, the laboratory will automatically examine the cell sample for any abnormality (cytology). The combination of the HPV test and the cytology test, if performed, will allow the laboratory to issue a report and make recommendation about any follow up, if needed.

How often should women have the Cervical Screening Test?

The test should be performed every 5 years. Some specific groups of women may require screening more often, but you will be advised by your doctor if this is necessary.

What happens if the test results are abnormal?

Your doctor will make a recommendation about the need for further tests or investigation:

- If the HPV test is negative, you should have a further cervical screening test in 5 years.
- If HPV is detected, you will need earlier follow up, as recommended by the laboratory and your doctor. This may involve referral to a specialist for colposcopy or a repeat HPV test in 12 months.

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College House,
254-260 Albert Street
East Melbourne,
Victoria 3002, Australia.

Ph: +61 3 9417 1699
Fax: +61 3 9419 0672
Email: ranzco@ranzco.edu.au
ranzco.edu.au