



CHECK
it OUT

Tips on getting through a Pap test

- Bring a friend or family member, and let them know in advance how they can support you.
- Let the doctor or nurse know if this is your first Pap test, so they know to be extra gentle.
- Don't take off your clothes until you have to.
- Consider whether or not to disclose your sexual orientation and practices to your health care provider. It's your choice. Disclosing can result in a better and more informed health care experience. However, disclosing can also put you at risk of homophobia. If you feel you are being treated badly, you can stop the examination at any time and leave.
- If you are not comfortable with terms like vagina, labia, etc. being used, ask the practitioner to use terms that you prefer.
- Take long, slow, deep breaths to help relax the muscles inside your vagina and help it to open up.
- Ask the doctor or nurse to explain what they are doing as they do it, if this would be helpful for you.
- Distract yourself: count the ceiling tiles, make your grocery list, or chat with the doctor or nurse or your companion.
- If at any time you need the exam to stop, tell your health care provider to stop and withdraw the speculum.

Where can I get a Pap test?

Pap tests in Ontario are performed by family doctors, gynaecologists, nurses and nurse practitioners. Most sexual health and birth control clinics also offer Pap tests. Below are some places to get started in your search.

In Toronto:

Planned Parenthood Toronto. For youth 13–29 years of age. No health card required. (416) 961-0113 or www.ppt.on.ca

Sherbourne Health Centre. No health card required. Registered clients only. (416) 324-4103 or www.sherbourne.on.ca

Women's College Hospital – Family Practice Health Centre. (416) 323-6060 or www.womenscollegehospital.ca/programs/program113.html

Women's College Hospital – Bay Centre for Birth Control. No health card required. (416) 351-3700 or www.womenscollegehospital.ca/programs/program63.html

Women's Health in Women's Hands Community Health Centre. For Black Women and Women of Colour. No health card required. (416) 593-7655 or www.whiwh.com

Toronto Public Health – Sexual Health Clinics. For women 25 and under. No health card required. www.toronto.ca/health/sexualhealth/sh_clinics.htm

Across Ontario:

Community Health Centres serve particular neighbourhoods or populations. Many do not require health cards. Visit www.aohc.org to find a Centre in your area.

Health Care Connect helps Ontarians find a family health care provider. 1-800-445-1822

Check out check-it-out.ca for information on queer-friendly Pap clinics in Toronto.

THIS IS A PROJECT OF THE QUEER WOMEN'S HEALTH INITIATIVE, A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN:



ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY PARTNERS:



SUPPORTED BY:



Calling all lesbian, bisexual, queer, gay and other women who have sex with women:

Paps
matter—
no matter who
you have
sex with

CHECK
it OUT

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"There is a misconception among queer women about what 'type' of woman should get a Pap done - we ALL need them"
- Chris, 28

What is a Pap test?

The Pap test is the most important screening tool used to prevent the development of cervical cancer. It is a microscopic examination of cells taken from the cervix, which is located at the narrow end of the uterus. The test detects abnormal cervical changes before they become cancerous.

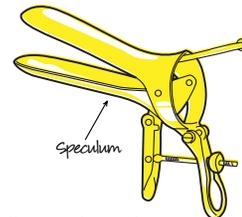
Studies have shown that lesbian, bisexual, queer, gay and any other women who have sex with women access Pap screenings at lower rates than heterosexual women.

Do I need one?

It's true: Paps are for lesbian, bisexual, queer, gay and any other women who have sex with women. If you've ever been sexually active (including oral sex, sex with toys and sex with fingers) and you have a cervix, you need an annual Pap test.

What happens during a Pap test?

The doctor or nurse will ask you to remove your clothing from the waist down and lie on an examination table on your back with your knees bent and feet in stirrups.



The doctor or nurse will insert a small metal or plastic instrument, called a speculum, into your vagina to open it so that the walls of the vagina and cervix can be seen.

A small broom-like device is used to take a sample of cells from the cervix. The test usually takes 2-3 minutes. You may feel some discomfort or pressure during a Pap test, but it should not be painful.

Sex, HPV and cervical cancer

The major causes of cervical cancer are high-risk strains of the human papillomavirus (HPV).

Lesbians, queer, bisexual, gay and other women who have sex with women have often been mistakenly told that we are not at risk for HPV, but we are at risk.

HPV is transmitted through genital skin-to-skin contact with anyone who has the infection - this includes contact during oral sex, sex with fingers or hands, genital rubbing and vaginal sex with toys.

Having HPV does not necessarily mean you are going to get cervical cancer, but if you have cervical cancer, it is likely that HPV was the cause of it.

Here are some ways you can reduce your risk of developing cervical cancer:

- Get regular Pap tests
- Encourage your partners who have a cervix to get regular Pap tests
- If you smoke, try to quit or smoke less
- Take care of yourself. Enjoy a balanced diet, exercise regularly, do your best to manage to stress and get enough rest to stay healthy and keep your immune system strong.

The best way to prevent cervical cancer is to prevent HPV. There is no way of completely preventing HPV infection, but there are some things you can do to reduce your risk:

- Use condoms on sex toys, dildos and penises, use dental dams or condoms cut up one side for oral sex and use latex gloves for finger play.
- Clean all of your toys after every use
- Consider the HPV vaccine, which prevents against four common strains of HPV.
- Talk to your sexual partners about HPV and decide on safer sex practices together.

You may have been told that because you have sex with other women, you do not need Pap tests. This is **NOT** true.

Any woman with a cervix who has had sex (including oral sex, sex with toys and sex with fingers) needs a Pap test.

Having a Pap test isn't always easy, but it's the best way to prevent cervical cancer.

In this brochure you will find information about what a Pap test is, why we need them and how to take care of ourselves and each other.

You can also visit www.check-it-out.ca for more detailed information.

Let's take care of ourselves and each other.