

# Protect yourself against cervical cancer

## What every woman should know about HPV

### The *digene* HPV Test



#### What is HPV?

- HPV stands for “human papillomavirus.”
- HPV is a very common virus. In fact, it’s estimated that 8 out of every 10 women get HPV by the age of 50.

#### How is HPV linked to cervical cancer?

- Certain “high-risk” types of HPV cause cervical cancer.
- For most women, HPV goes away before it causes any problems. For some women, however, the infection persists.
- When the infection doesn’t go away, abnormal cells may form on the cervix.
- Abnormal cells can develop into cervical cancer if they are not detected and treated early.

#### How do you get HPV?

- HPV is spread through intimate (genital) skin-to-skin contact, usually during sexual intercourse.
- Your chance of getting HPV increases if you have more than one sexual partner. But you can get the virus from just one person.
- The virus can “hide” in your cervix for months or years before it causes abnormal cell changes. Therefore, it is impossible to know for certain when and from whom you got an HPV infection.

#### How can cervical cancer be prevented?

- There are two tests that can protect you from cervical cancer: A Pap test and an HPV test.
- To perform these tests, a doctor or nurse collects a sample of cells from your cervix during your gynecological exam.

#### What is a Pap test?

- A Pap test looks for abnormal cells in the cervix that are caused by HPV.
- The sample of cervical cells is sent to a lab, where it is examined under a microscope for signs of abnormal changes.

#### What is an HPV test?

- The HPV test looks for the virus that causes cervical cancer.
- The sample of cells is sent to a lab, where advanced molecular technology is used to detect high-risk types of HPV.
- The *digene*® HPV Test is the only HPV test approved by the FDA to be used with the Pap for routine cervical cancer screening of women 30 and older.
- The HPV test plus the Pap test lets you and your healthcare provider know if you are at risk for cervical cancer and need additional exams.

Visit [www.theHPVtest.com](http://www.theHPVtest.com) for more information.



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## Which test should you get and when?

### Women 30 and older

- Cervical cancer most often develops in women 30 and older, because HPV infections in these women are more likely to be long-lasting.
- Cervical cancer screening guidelines recommend that every woman age 30 or older get the HPV test along with her Pap test.
- If your Pap test is normal but you have high-risk HPV, it's a warning that you may be at risk of developing cervical disease.
- When the Pap and HPV tests are done together on a regular basis, cervical cancer can nearly always be prevented.



### Women younger than 30

- All women should begin getting a Pap test three years after first sexual intercourse or at the age of 21 – whichever comes first.
- Routine HPV testing isn't necessary at this age, because HPV infections in younger women usually go away on their own without causing problems.
- Women age 21 and older should have an HPV test when their Pap results are unclear. Your doctor or nurse may describe this kind of Pap as ASC-US – atypical squamous cells of undetermined significance.

Women should be screened regularly with the Pap and (if 30 or older) the HPV test, even if they have received the HPV vaccine. Ask your doctor or nurse about the tests and the schedule that are best for you.

## What do my results mean?

	Women older than 30	
	You do <i>not</i> have HPV	You <i>have</i> HPV
Normal Pap test	Repeat screening according to your doctor's or nurse's recommendation. You should still return each year for your annual visit.	Repeat the Pap and HPV tests in 12 months.
Inconclusive (ASC-US) Pap test	Repeat the Pap and HPV tests in 12 months.	Your doctor or nurse will probably perform a colposcopy.*
Abnormal Pap test	Your doctor or nurse will perform a colposcopy* and may order additional tests.	Your doctor or nurse will perform a colposcopy* and may order additional tests.

\* Colposcopy is a procedure using magnification to look at your cervix more closely. Usually, a sample of tissue (called a biopsy) is taken during the colposcopy and sent to a lab for analysis.

Based on: Wright, T.C., Jr. et al. (2007) 2006 consensus guidelines for the management of women with abnormal cervical cancer screening tests. *J. Low. Genit. Tract Dis.* **4**, 346.

Visit [www.theHPVtest.com](http://www.theHPVtest.com) for more information.

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