

Pap testing in Manitoba has changed:

What you need to know



The recommendations for Pap testing in Manitoba have changed. The new CervixCheck guidelines are based on current evidence from many scientific research studies and make sure women receive the greatest benefit from cervical cancer screening and avoid unnecessary tests.

For more information about HPV, Pap tests and cervical cancer, visit GetCheckedManitoba.ca



CervixCheck@cancercare.mb.ca
5-25 Sherbrook Street, Winnipeg, MB R3C 2B1
Tel: 204-788-8626 Fax: 204-779-5748
Toll Free: 1-855-95-CHECK
GetCheckedManitoba.ca

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What's changed about Pap testing in Manitoba?

1. When to start having Pap tests

What is the recommendation?

Pap testing should start at 21 years of age for all women who have ever been sexually active. Sexual activity includes sexual intercourse and skin-to-skin genital contact.

Why has the recommendation changed?

The harms of screening women under 21 years of age significantly outweigh the benefits.

- **Pap tests and follow-up procedures can expose young women to unnecessary risks including:**
 - ✓ Discomfort or bleeding from the tests,
 - ✓ Anxiety that may result from abnormal test results,
 - ✓ Over-diagnosis of abnormal cell changes that would go away on their own, and
 - ✓ Problems with future pregnancies from some treatments during colposcopy.
- **Cervical cancer is very rare in women younger than 21 years of age.**
 - ✓ Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a common sexually transmitted virus that can cause abnormal changes on the cervix and cervical cancer.
 - ✓ Most HPV infections in young women do not cause cancer and 90% of infections will disappear on their own within 2 years without any treatment.
 - ✓ When the infection does not go away, abnormal changes develop that may lead to cervical cancer. These changes take many years to happen.
 - ✓ Delaying screening to age 21 will still find problems - if they happen - before they turn to cancer.

2. How often to have Pap tests

What is the recommendation?

All women who have ever been sexually active should have regular Pap tests **every 3 years** starting at age 21.

Why has the recommendation changed?

Having a Pap test every year offers very little added benefit over having a Pap test every 3 years and can expose women to unnecessary risks including:

- ✓ Discomfort or bleeding from the tests,
- ✓ Anxiety that may result from abnormal test results,
- ✓ Over-diagnosis of abnormal cell changes that would go away on their own, and
- ✓ Problems with future pregnancies from some treatments during colposcopy.

CervixCheck is planning to send reminder letters to women who are overdue for a Pap test. Contact CervixCheck to find out when you had your last Pap test.