

Pap Smears

During a **Papanicolaou test (“Pap smear”)**, your midwife will use a stick or brush to remove a few cells from the surface and the inside of your cervix. The cells will be placed on a glass slide and sent to a lab for testing. The lab will check the sample for abnormal cells, including **pre-cancerous** or **cancerous** cells.

How often do I need a Pap smear?

- ✓ If you are 21 – 29 years old, we recommend a Pap smear every 3 years
- ✓ If you are 30 – 65 years old, we recommend a Pap smear with a test for **Human Papillomavirus (HPV)** every 3–5 years

Do I still need a Pap smear if I received the HPV vaccine?

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recommends that everyone with a cervix follow the guidelines above, regardless of HPV vaccination status. However, the HPV vaccine may reduce your risk of HPV and cervical cancer. The prevalence of vaccine-type HPV has decreased by 56% since the vaccine was introduced in 2006. If you were not vaccinated against HPV as an adolescent, you may be a candidate for the HPV vaccine as an adult. However, this vaccine is *not* recommended during pregnancy.

What if my Pap smear results are abnormal?

First, don’t panic. An abnormal result does not mean that you have cancer. Abnormal cells may change back to normal on their own. Even if abnormal cells continue to multiply, it takes years for cancer to develop.

If you have an abnormal Pap smear, your midwife may recommend **additional testing**. Follow-up tests may include a repeat Pap smear, a colposcopy, or a cervical biopsy. If these tests indicate high-grade changes, you may need treatment to remove the abnormal cells.

Other Tests

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Test	Your midwife may ask the lab to check for Human Papillomavirus (HPV) . Most sexually active people get HPV at some point. Most HPV infections are asymptomatic and go away on their own. However, a few strains of HPV can cause cervical cancer .
Gonorrhea and Chlamydia Cultures	Your midwife may perform a swab test for chlamydia and gonorrhea . These sexually transmitted infections are often asymptomatic. If left untreated, both infections can increase the risk of miscarriage and preterm delivery. Both infections can be treated with antibiotics .
Wet Mount Test	If you are concerned about other infections, your midwife may collect a sample of cells for a wet mount test. These cells can be analyzed to for bacterial vaginosis, trichomonas vaginitis, or yeast infections .