

Screening for Cervical Health

Cervical cancer is one of the few cancers that can be prevented by screening. Early detection of abnormalities and timely treatment can save lives.



Cervical cancer is the cancer of the neck of the uterus (womb). It is the ninth most common cancer amongst females in Hong Kong.

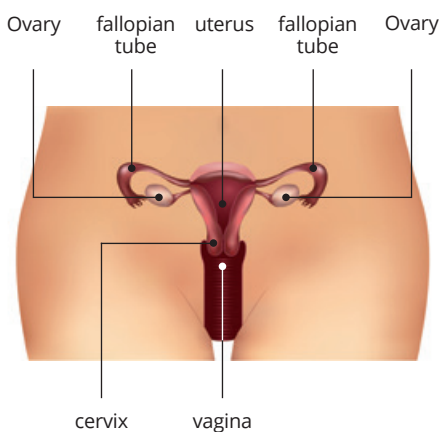


Diagram 1. Location of the cervix

A pap test

A pap test is a simple procedure that takes only a few minutes to perform. The test takes cells from the cervix and detects abnormal cells or cells that could turn into cancer. If abnormal cells are present, this test can detect them even at the early stages, when it can be treated.

Who needs to have a pap test?

Hong Kong's Department of Health recommends that women aged 25-64 years with sexual experience should have regular pap tests. After two consecutive years of normal test results, the pap test can be done at a three year interval. Women below the age of 25 with sexual experiences and/or have risk factors for cervical cancer e.g. smoking, or having multiple sexual partners, should seek advice from doctors regarding the need for pap tests.

Women who have never had sexual intercourse or who have had a total hysterectomy generally do not require pap tests.

Preparation for a pap test

To obtain a better cell sample, ladies should:

- schedule the test for 10 to 20 days **after** the first day of the previous period.
- reschedule the appointment if menstruating.
- not douche or apply any vaginal creams or lubricants 48 hours prior to the pap test.
- not have sexual intercourse 24 hours prior to the pap test.

Procedures of a pap test

- To do a pap test, a doctor or nurse will push apart the walls of the vagina using a speculum, which is a device that looks like a duck bill. Then, a small brush will be used to collect cells from the cervix. These cells will then be examined in a laboratory to check for abnormalities.

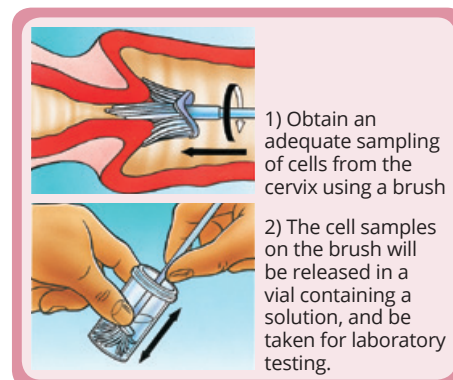


Diagram 2. Procedures of a pap test

Interpretation of pap test results

Test results will usually be available within four working days. These are the different pap test results:

- **Negative** – it means no abnormal cells have been detected in the cervix. You should follow the recommended schedule and repeat the test in 1-3 years time.
- **Abnormal** – it means abnormal cells have been detected in the cervix. However, it does not always mean the presence of cancer cells. Below are some common abnormal findings:
 - **Inflammation**
It is a common condition and usually does not mean there is a problem. Severe inflammation can be caused by an infection.
 - **Atypical Squamous Cells of Undetermined Significance (ASCUS)**
The cells are somewhat different from normal cells under the microscope but the degree of change is not severe enough for them to be called pre-cancerous cells.
 - **Atypical Glandular Cells (AGC)**
These changes are usually more serious. Women with AGC have a slightly higher risk of cervical cancer.
 - **Low-grade Squamous Intraepithelial Lesion (LSIL)**
There are changes in the size and shape of the cells. LSIL is often associated with the presence of HPV.
 - **High-grade Squamous Intraepithelial Lesion (HSIL)**
The cells are very different from normal cells. These are usually precancerous and can lead to cervical cancer if not treated.
 - **Squamous Cancer Cells**
The cells appear extremely abnormal on pap test. A gynaecologist will perform additional tests and discuss possible treatment options.



Positive results

The following tests may be prescribed by the doctor for further investigation of the abnormal pap test results:

Repeat pap test in six to 12 months – It is recommended for conditions such as inflammation, infection or reactive cellular changes. Sometimes the abnormal cells might return to normal by itself or after treatment of the infection.

HPV test – This checks for high-risk HPV infection which can cause cervical cancer. It is recommended for ASCUS. If high-risk HPV is not detected, the chance of severe cell deterioration is very low. If high-risk HPV is present, further assessment is recommended.

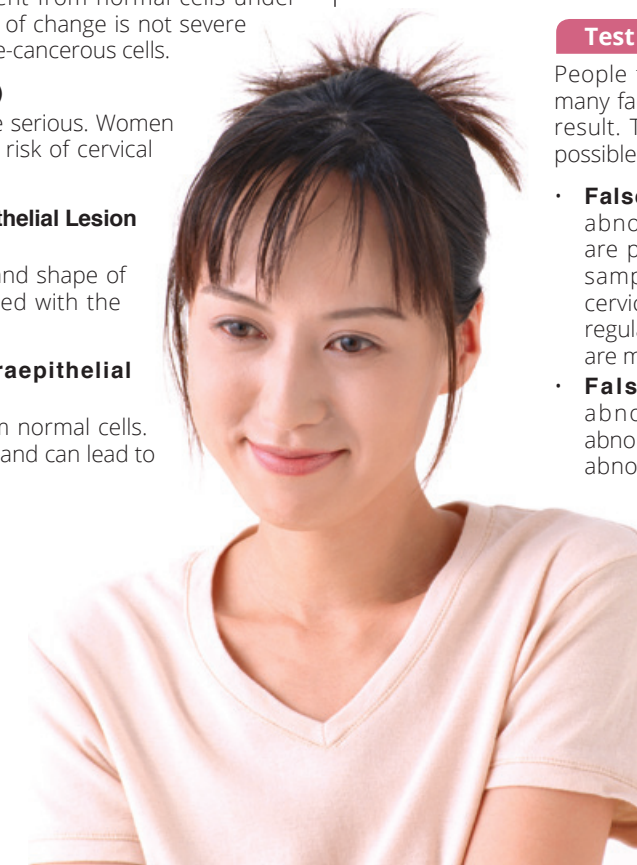
Colposcopy – It is recommended for conditions such as AGC, LSIL, HSIL or ASCUS with high risk HPV. During a colposcopy, the cervix is examined using a colposcope, which is a device that works like a microscope, and allows the cervix to be seen in fine detail. During this test, tiny tissue samples from the cervix (a biopsy) might be taken if required. *For more information regarding this test, please refer to the patient information sheet on "Colposcopy".*

Test accuracy

People taking pap tests should be aware that many factors may affect the accuracy of the test result. The following occurrences may also be possible:

- **False negative** - test results showed no abnormality but in reality abnormal cells are present at the cervix. It could be due to sampling, transfer or laboratory error. As cervical cancer takes a long time to develop, regular testings can detect abnormalities that are missed by a single test.
- **False positive** - test results showed abnormality, but actually there are no abnormal cells in the cervix. Since some of the abnormal cells can regress completely, or if they are very local or small, they can hardly be detected by subsequent tests. In this case, repeated testings for further examination can help to reassure that all is well.

It is important to note that a pap test is just an initial screening for cervical cancer. Many women with abnormal results do not have cancer. Remember, **early detection saves lives.**



Checked by:
Dr. Shiba Poon

References:
Centre of Health Protection, Hong Kong

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matilda
International Hospital
明德國際醫院

Matilda International Hospital
(Statutory Name: Matilda And War Memorial Hospital)
41 Mount Kellett Road, The Peak, Hong Kong

t 2849 0111
info@matilda.org

Scan the QR code to obtain information of our medical centre or clinic downtown

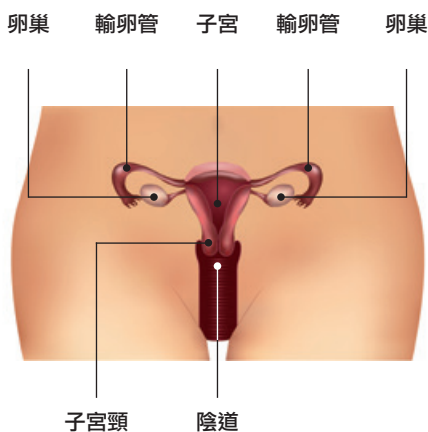


及早檢查 預防子宮頸癌

子宮頸癌是少數可以透過篩查而預防的癌症之一，及早發現異常和治療可挽救生命。



子宮頸癌是指子宮頸部的癌症，是香港女性第九最常見的癌症。



圖一：子宮頸的位置

柏氏抹片檢查

柏氏抹片檢查是一項簡單檢查，只須數分鐘。醫護人員從子宮頸取樣，檢測細胞有沒有突變或異常的細胞，從而讓病人及早檢測和得到適當治療。

應接受柏氏抹片檢查的人士

香港衛生署建議25至64歲、曾有性行為的女士應定期作柏氏抹片檢查。如連續兩年的檢查結果屬正常，可每三年才檢查一次。然而，25歲以下並已有性經驗的女士、或生活方式有增加患子宮頸癌風險，如吸煙及有多位性伴侶的女士，則應向醫生查詢檢查的需要。

從未有性經驗或已接受子宮切除手術的女士，一般不需要接受子宮頸抹片檢查。

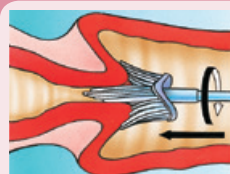
檢查前的準備

為採集更佳的細胞樣本，請：

- 於上一次經期首天計的第10至20天內進行檢查
- 如月經來潮，須另安排檢查時間
- 須於檢查前48小時避免灌洗陰道及使用潤滑劑或在陰道塗上任何軟膏
- 須於檢查前24小時內避免進行性行為

檢查程序

檢查時，醫生或護士會利用一個鴨咀形的儀器將陰道壁張開，然後用一把小掃從子宮頸抹取一些細胞樣本，並送到化驗室作化驗。



一) 以專用小掃從子宮頸取下細胞樣本。



二) 將小掃上的細胞釋放於含有保存液之瓶子裏待化驗。

圖二：柏氏抹片檢查程序

柏氏抹片檢驗結果

一般於四個工作天內獲悉結果，以下是一般結果的詮釋：

- 陰性：這顯示子宮頸內沒有異常細胞，請遵循建議，於1至3年內重複測試。
- 異常(陽性)：這顯示檢測到子宮頸內有異常細胞，但並不代表有癌細胞。常見的異常結果包括：
 - **發炎**
子宮頸發炎十分普遍，並不代表有健康問題。嚴重發炎可由細菌感染引起。
 - **非典型鱗狀細胞 (ASCUS)**
顯微鏡下，細胞少許異常，但這些細胞變化並不嚴重，故不能稱作癌前細胞。
 - **非典型腺狀上皮細胞 (AGC)**
腺狀上皮細胞出現異常變化，通常較嚴重，患上子宮頸癌的機會亦相對較大。
 - **低度鱗狀上皮內病變 (LSIL)**
細胞的形狀和大小出現變化，通常與人類乳頭狀病毒(HPV)有關連。
 - **高度鱗狀上皮內病變 (HSIL)**
細胞十分異常，通常屬癌前細胞，若不加以治療，可引致子宮頸癌。
 - **鱗狀細胞癌**
鱗狀細胞癌是指檢驗出極度異常的細胞。醫生會為您作進一步測試及與您商討治療方案。



陽性結果跟進

如結果屬陽性，醫生會建議下列檢查，以進一步檢驗異常的細胞：

於6或12個月後進行另一次子宮頸細胞檢驗 - 如檢查結果呈現發炎、感染或良性反應的細胞變化，醫生則會建議於數月後進行另一次檢查，因為很多時異常細胞會自然或經治療後回復正常。

人類乳頭瘤病毒測試 (HPV) - HPV測試能檢驗出是否有引發子宮頸癌的HPV病毒存在，如檢驗結果沒有檢測到HPV病毒，那麼細胞嚴重惡化的機會較低。若HPV病毒存在，則建議作進一步評估。

陰道子宮頸窺鏡檢查 - 這項檢查適用於AGC、LSIL、HSIL和ASCUS等結果及HPV高風險的病人，醫生會使用陰道鏡檢查子宮頸，陰道鏡是一種有如顯微鏡一樣的設備，可讓醫生仔細觀察子宮頸。檢查期間，如有需要，可從子宮頸取出細微組織樣本作活片檢驗。欲知詳情，請參閱另一病人資訊 - 「陰道窺鏡檢查」。

檢查準確度

柏氏抹片檢查的結果或會受到不同因素，影響其準確性：

- **假陰性結果**：檢查結果顯示沒有異常細胞，但其實存在異常細胞，原因或與採樣、運送樣本或處理樣本時出現問題有關。然而，子宮頸癌細胞一般需一段時間發展成癌細胞，因此，定期檢驗有助及時驗出異常細胞的存在與否。
- **假陽性結果**：檢查結果顯示異常但其實並沒有異常細胞存在。由於一些異常細胞面積較少或會自然回復正常，重覆測試亦未能確定異常細胞的存在。如要確定有否異常細胞，病人可重覆檢驗。

請緊記，柏氏抹片檢驗是一項檢查子宮頸細胞的初步檢查。就算得出陽性的結果亦不等於患上癌症。**及早檢查及求診能挽救生命！**

核對：

潘彥芝醫生

參考資料：

香港衛生防護中心

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明德國際醫院

(法定名稱：Matilda And War Memorial Hospital)

香港山頂加列山道 41 號

t 2849 0111
info@matilda.org

掃描以下QR Code，
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