

Information for women

Research into whether women prefer a new self-test for HPV instead of going to the doctor/nurse for a smear test

What is this study about?

This study is to find out if women like using a new test for cervical screening. In the new test women use a swab in their vagina to find out if they have the human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV is a virus spread by skin-to-skin contact and is linked to cervical cancer. The new self-test is different from, but as good as, the usual smear test which a nurse or doctor does.

This study will help the Ministry of Health decide how women will be tested in the future. The goal of the study is to find out if using the self-test means that more women get checked to prevent cervical cancer. We would like to invite Māori, Pacific and Asian women in Auckland and Wellington to take part in this study. Later this self-test may be offered to other groups of women in New Zealand.

To compare this new self-test with the usual screening test, some women in the study are being offered the usual smear test done by your doctor or nurse, and some women are being offered the new self-test.

What am I being asked to do?

You have been put into one of three groups. A computer program has decided which group you are in. Two of the groups are being offered the new self-test and one group is being reminded to come in for the usual smear test. Women offered the self-test are either being posted a self-test kit or asked to come into the clinic.

All of the self-tests, usual smear tests, and any follow-up tests that you might need are being provided free during this study.

If you decide to take part in the study you will need to sign a consent form.

- If you have been asked to come into the clinic the nurse will show you a video explaining what the study is about and answer your questions. You will then use the kit and instruction sheet to do the self-test in the bathroom at the clinic. You will give your test back to the clinic who will send your test to a laboratory for testing for HPV.
- If you have been reminded to come in for a usual smear, your doctor or nurse will do the smear.
- If you are posted the test kit at home, you will do the test at home using the kit and written instructions, and return your test following the instructions. You will be given a telephone number to use if you have any questions.

If you are in one of the HPV self-test groups

How will I find out the results of my self-test?

The study nurse or your nurse or doctor will contact you with your results within 10 days after your test. If your test results show you do not have HPV, you don't have to do anything else. Your nurse or doctor will let you know when you are due for your next smear test.

What if my test results show I have HPV?

A test that shows you have HPV does NOT mean you have cervical cancer. We will ask you to come into the clinic to talk about what the results mean.

It is your decision whether you have follow-up tests or not. We strongly recommend that you do have a follow-up test to look for any cell changes that might need treatment. In this follow-up test a nurse or doctor at a GP or hospital clinic looks at your cervix, either to take a smear or do a colposcopy or both. A colposcopy is a simple procedure by a specialist to look at the cervix. There will be no charge for any follow-up tests.

The study nurse can arrange help so you can get to the clinic, or talk more about what the test results mean. We will talk to you about the follow-up tests and answer all your questions. We can also talk to your family/whānau if you want us to.

How did you find doing the self-test?

We may ask you to answer some questions about any smear tests you have had and how you found the self-test. You do not have to answer any of the questions if you do not want to.

More information

On this page there is more information about HPV, cervical cancer, reducing your risk of cervical cancer and the HPV test.

More about HPV

Being infected with HPV is very common. Four out of five men and women will have HPV at some time in their lives.

Some types of HPV stay in the body for a long time. For most women, having HPV does not cause any problems. Your body gets rid of the virus by itself.

Having HPV doesn't mean that your partner is being unfaithful to you. You could still have HPV even if you are in a long-term relationship with one person, are not currently having sex, or have not had sex in a long time.

More about how HPV is linked to cervical cancer

Certain types of HPV stay in the body for a very long time and can cause cell changes in the cervix that can lead to cervical cancer.

The most common types of HPV that cause cell changes that lead to cervical cancer are called HPV 16 and HPV 18. There are another 12 types of HPV that can cause cell changes that can lead to cervical cancer. There are also other types of HPV that can cause minor changes to the cells of the cervix, or sometimes genital warts. These types are usually cleared by your body within one to two years and do not cause cervical cancer.

How can I reduce my risk of cervical cancer?

The best way to reduce your risk of cervical cancer is to have regular cervical screening with your nurse or doctor.

How is HPV treated?

There are treatments for cell changes to your cervix caused by HPV. This is why it is important for you to have follow-up tests if your test results show you have one of the types of HPV that can cause cervical cancer. Treatment happens at a hospital clinic and is very successful at stopping serious cell changes from becoming cervical cancer.

More about the HPV self-test

The new self-test is a very accurate test to check for HPV. You don't need to know where your cervix is to do this test. The new self-test does **not** check for other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), such as chlamydia or HIV.

Some HPV tests are currently available with a cervical smear taken by a doctor or nurse. The self-test is currently not offered to all women. The self-test is only being offered to women as part of this study. If, at any time, you wish to opt-out of self-testing and have a smear test, talk to the study nurse or your own doctor or nurse.

Is doing the HPV test myself right for me?

Some women find doing the self-test is easier than getting a smear with their nurse or doctor.

If you have had a hysterectomy, ask the study nurse whether the self-test is right for you.

If you have had the HPV vaccine, you can still take part in this study.

Are there any possible risks with the self-test?

In New Zealand we advise you not to do this self-test if you are pregnant. However, overseas, pregnant women have done this self-test and have not reported any problems.

Who is doing this study?

Massey University, Waitematā District Health Board, Auckland District Health Board, Hutt Valley District Health Board and Capital & Coast District Health Board are working with local clinics to do this study.

Withdrawing from this study

Being part of this study is your choice. You can choose not to take part, or to withdraw from the study at any time. Your care won't be affected in any way. If you withdraw from this study, we will keep the information we have collected to the date you withdraw. We will not collect any new information after that.

Consent for further testing and contact (optional)

We will also ask for your agreement that if you do have one of the types of HPV that can cause cancer, we can keep part of your sample for possible further testing of the HPV virus types present. This will help us understand more about the HPV virus in New Zealand. Only testing for types of HPV will be done on your sample. The samples will remain in New Zealand, and will be stored at the Massey University Centre for Public Health Research laboratory in Wellington for up to 10 years. If you withdraw from the study you can ask for your sample to be destroyed.

We would also like to contact some women after doing the self-test to ask some more questions about their experience. You can choose whether you talk to us again or not. Your care will not be affected if you do not wish to talk to us again.

Privacy and confidentiality

All information collected from you as part of this study will be confidential. You will be given a study number so that your name will not be used on the study documents. The study team will see the information and your test results. Your test results will be shared with your usual nurse or doctor, to make sure you get the correct follow-up. In the same way as with a smear, your name and test results will also be held on the National Cervical Screening Programme Register and one of the laboratory registers (TestSafe/Éclair). The information from this study will be marked as research on the registers. The information will also be available to health professionals involved in your care. Only approved National Cervical Screening Programme staff and health professionals will be able to get access to the research information.

Your self-test or smear will be stored by the laboratory for the usual amount of time (for quality checking).

National Cervical Screening Programme (NCSP)

You can find out more about cervical screening and follow up tests at www.timetoscreen.nz

All women who participate in this study will be invited back for another smear test when next due. The NCSP advises all women who have unusual bleeding, pelvic pain or discharge to see their doctor and not wait for their next smear test.

ACC statement

It is not likely that you will get injured in this study. If you do, you will be able to get compensation from ACC just the same as if you were injured in an accident at work or at home. You will have to put in a claim to ACC, which may take some time to be assessed. If your claim is accepted, you will receive funding to help you recover.

Further information

Thank you for thinking about being part of this study. If you have any further questions, or complaints about the study, you can contact the clinical lead of this study:

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For cultural support, please contact:

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This study has received ethics approval (number: 17/NTB/120).