

PAP TEST

Questions and Answers

What is a Pap Test?

The Pap test is a way to examine cells collected from the cervix and vagina. It can show the presence of infection, inflammation, abnormal cells, or cancer. A Pap test and pelvic exam are important parts of a woman's routine health care.

What is a Pelvic Exam?

In a pelvic exam, the uterus, vagina, ovaries, fallopian tubes, bladder, and rectum are felt to find any abnormality in their shape or size. During a pelvic exam, an instrument called a speculum is used to widen the opening of the vagina so that the upper portion of the vagina and the cervix can be seen.

Why are a Pap test and pelvic exam important?

As with many types of cancer, cancer of the cervix can be successfully treated and cured if it is detected early – before it becomes invasive. Regular Pap tests and pelvic exams could prevent most invasive cancers of the cervix.

Who performs a Pap test?

Doctors and other specially trained health care professionals, such as physician assistants, nurse midwives, and nurse practitioners, may perform Pap tests and pelvic exams. These individuals are often call practitioners or clinicians.

How is a Pap test done?

A Pap test is quick and painless; it can be done in a doctor's office, a clinic, or a hospital. While a woman lies on an exam table, the clinician inserts a speculum into her vagina to widen the opening. To do the test, a sample of cells is taken from in and around the cervix with a wooden scraper, a cotton swab, or a small cervical brush. The specimen is placed on a glass slide or in a solution, which is sent to a laboratory for examination.

How often should a Pap test be done?

Women who are or have been sexually active, or have reached age 18, should have a regular Pap test and a physical exam. There is no upper age limit for Pap tests. Older women should continue to have regular physical exams, including a pelvic exam and a Pap test. A woman who has had a hysterectomy (an operation to remove the uterus and cervix) should continue to have Pap tests. Her doctor may do a Pap test less frequently, depending on the reason for the hysterectomy.

Important Phone Numbers:

USI Student Health Center 465-1250
Monday - Friday 8a.m. - 4:30p.m.
USI Wellness Center 464-1807
Deaconess Hospital Emergency Dept. 450-3405

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