

CERVICAL SMEARS

PREVENTING CERVICAL CANCER

SCREENING FOR CERVICAL CANCER

Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable and curable of all cancers. Cervical cancer is characterised by the growth of abnormal cells. However, before the actual cancer develops, there are a number of changes in the cells in the cervix. These abnormal cells can be detected by doing a Pap smear test. Treatment of these abnormal cells can actually prevent cervical cancer.

What Is A Pap Smear?

A Pap smear, named after its inventor Dr George Papanicolou, involves taking cells from the cervix for detection of changes under a microscope. The findings allow for preventive action to be taken before the cancer can develop.

A Pap smear takes a couple of minutes to perform. The procedure is uncomfortable but is not painful. The smear is sent to the pathology laboratory for examination.

Pap smears are carried out for married women. The test is best done a week or two after the end of the menstruation period. If you no longer have periods, you can have a Pap smear any time.

Currently, it is not considered necessary to continue screening beyond the age of 64, provided a woman has had three consecutive negative smears and the most recent one took place no more than three years ago. If you are 65 years old and have never been screened, you should have a smear. If you have had a hysterectomy and the cervix has been removed with the rest of the womb, you do not need a smear, provided no abnormality was found in the cervix.



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What Does An Abnormal Pap Smear Mean?

Most Pap smear results indicate that the cervix is healthy and no abnormal cells have been found. Some smears will show abnormal cells. This does not necessarily mean that cancer is present. A number of minor abnormalities can return to normality, without treatment. However, at present there is no way of finding out which cells will develop cancer. As such the abnormality needs to be treated or monitored carefully. You will need to discuss the most appropriate follow-up with your doctor. This may include more frequent Pap smears for a time.

Persistent cell changes may be further investigated with a procedure called Colposcopy. This procedure, in which the cervix is examined through a microscope for closer inspection of the abnormal areas of the cervix, allows the taking of small amounts of tissue for further examination.

Cervical Smear Facilities At Aga Khan University Hospital

Cervical smears can be done at the following clinics:

- Community Health Centre (CHC)
- Consulting Clinic # 4 Obs/Gyn
- Pathology Laboratory

Appointments can be made at the above clinics by calling the following 4930051 extensions:

- Community Health Centre (CHC) - ext. # 1491
- Consulting Clinic # 4 - ext. # 1034, 1035
- Laboratory - ext. # 1552

Results Of The Smear

Results can be obtained within two weeks. You will be given an appointment after two weeks by the doctor who took the smear, and the results will be discussed with you. However, urgent results can be provided on a physician's request.

We hope this will provide you with all the necessary information. In case if you have any problem, please feel free to contact the following extensions:

- Tel: 4930051 ext. # 4641, 4647

For further information, please contact:
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