

# SCSL Digital Collections

## The pap test : what you need to know about cervical cancer screening

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## Who is eligible for free Pap testing?

The Best Chance Network\* provides FREE cervical and breast cancer screening for women. You might be eligible to receive these services if you:

- Meet certain age requirements
- Are a resident of South Carolina
- Have no health insurance, in certain high deductible health plans and/ or under-insured (certain eligibility guidelines apply)
- Meet certain income guidelines.

To find out if you are eligible for these services, call the American Cancer Society at

**1-800-227-2345**

and ask about the *S.C. Best Chance Network.*



\* The Best Chance Network has a limited number of appointments available.

## Cervical Cancer Screening Saves Lives!

### How you can help:

Share this brochure with someone you know.

Tell a friend or co-worker about the importance of screening.

Become a Best Chance Network Volunteer:  
**1-800-227-2345**



South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control

[www.scdhec.gov/bcn](http://www.scdhec.gov/bcn)



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## The Pap Test



What *You* Need to Know About Cervical Cancer Screening

## What is cervical cancer?

The cervix is the opening to the womb inside your vagina. Not all changes in the cells are cancer or lead to cancer, but it is important to be tested.

### What are the risk factors for cervical cancer?

Not getting Pap tests is a risk factor associated with cervical cancer. Another leading risk factor is an infection known as HPV (human papillomavirus). HPV is a common virus spread through sexual contact. It is usually prevented by a strong immune system. Two types of HPV cause 70 percent of cervical cancers. Others may cause genital warts and are not cancerous.

There are other factors in addition to infection with HPV that are thought to contribute to the development of cervical cancer. These include: smoking, a weak immune system, having multiple sexual partners or having had sex at an early age.

## What is a Pap test?

The Pap test (often called *Pap smear*) looks for changes in the cervix that may lead to cancer. A small sample of cells is gently removed from the cervix and examined under a microscope.

### How should I prepare for my Pap test?

- Do not schedule your Pap test during your period (menses).
- 48 hours before your Pap test, avoid using douches, vaginal lotions or jellies.
- 48 hours before the Pap test, do not have sex or insert anything into your vagina, including tampons.

***These actions may change the results of your Pap test.***



## Understanding your results.

The results may take a couple of weeks to be processed. If the lab finds cell changes, the Pap test result is called "positive" or abnormal. If cells look healthy, the result is called "negative" or normal.

**If your results are normal**, it is important to continue to be tested on a regular basis to detect any new changes in the cells of your cervix. Your health care provider will discuss with you how often a Pap test needs to be performed.

**If your results are not normal**, further testing may be required. It does not mean you have cervical cancer. Often times, a colposcopy will be ordered. A colposcopy involves looking at the cervix with a strong light and a special scope. The doctor is able to take tiny samples from places on the cervix. This is known as a biopsy. Usually, this is done in a doctor's office and may cause some mild discomfort. Your health care provider should discuss your results with you.