

**HOW DO I GET HPV?**

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is a common virus that can infect your vagina or cervix. You can get HPV from sexual contact with someone’s genitals. This includes touching, oral sex, vaginal sex, and anal sex. You can have HPV for a long time and not know it. It is hard to tell when and where you got it. It is usually cleared by your body in 2 years without treatment.

**WHAT IS THE LINK BETWEEN HPV AND CERVICAL CANCER?**

HPV is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in Canada and the world. About 8 out of 10 people who are not vaccinated will get HPV at some point in their life. There are over 100 types of HPV. Some of them can cause cervical cancer. These are called high-risk HPV types. There are at least 14 high-risk HPV types. High-risk HPV types can cause cells on your cervix to become abnormal. These abnormal cells may become cancer cells over time.

**HOW DO I PROTECT MYSELF FROM HPV?**

The best way to protect yourself from HPV is to get the HPV vaccine. The vaccine can stop some types of HPV from infecting you. You can get the vaccine even if you have had HPV before. This is because you may not have been exposed to all the types of HPV that the vaccine protects you from. You can also lower your risk of getting HPV by:

- Having fewer sexual partners
- Using condoms
- Don’t smoke, as smoking may hurt the body’s ability to fight off HPV

To learn more about getting the HPV vaccine as an adult, visit **[www.HealthPEI.ca/PublicHealth](http://www.HealthPEI.ca/PublicHealth)**.

**HOW DO I LOWER MY RISK OF CERVICAL CANCER?**

- Get HPV tests regularly.
- Follow up if your HPV test is not normal. Your health care provider will tell you what to do next.
- Consider getting the HPV vaccine.
- Stay up to date with HPV testing even if you got the HPV vaccine.

**HOW DO I TREAT HPV?**

There is no cure for HPV, but there are treatments for abnormal cells. Your treatment will depend on your HPV test result. You may need a repeat HPV test in 12 months or you may be sent to a specialist for a colposcopy. It is important to follow your health care provider’s advice to keep track of your HPV status. Most people will clear HPV by themselves over time, but you can still get HPV again or have it come back.

**WHAT IS COLPOSCOPY?**

A colposcopy is a procedure that looks at your cervix more closely. A gynecologist is a doctor who specializes in women and diversity health. They will do the colposcopy for you using a microscope to look at your cervix. They may take a small sample of cells from your cervix (biopsy) and send it to the lab for testing. There are different treatments for abnormal cells, depending on how they look. Your health care provider will tell you the best treatment for you.

**WHERE DO I GO FOR AN HPV TEST?**

You can get HPV tests from your health care provider. You can also get HPV tests from Health PEI Cervical Cancer Screening Service. They offer HPV testing at different health clinics where you can go for an HPV test in person.

To get ready for your HPV test:

- Choose a day when you don’t have your period.
- Don’t have sex for 48 hours before the test.
- Don’t use tampons, creams, or medicines in your vagina for 48 hours before the test.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
**[www.hpvinfos.ca](http://www.hpvinfos.ca)**  
**[www.HealthPEI.ca/CervicalScreening](http://www.HealthPEI.ca/CervicalScreening)**  
**1-888-561-2233**  
**[colcancerscreening@ihis.org](mailto:colcancerscreening@ihis.org)**  
**Fax 902-370-5870**

Screening is one of the best things  
you can do to prevent cancer.

**BREAST 1-888-592-9888**  
**COLON 1-888-561-2233**



Call if you are unsure what to do about a health issue or need health information.

**What is a  
HPV TEST?**



**Health PEI**

WHY ARE HPV TESTS NEEDED?

HPV testing looks for the virus that may cause cervical cancer. The testing identifies people who are more likely to develop abnormal cell changes caused by HPV.

WHO SHOULD GET SCREENED?

You should get a HPV test if you:

- Have a cervix
- Are 25 to 65 years old
- Have had any kind of sexual contact (oral, manual or genital) with another person of any gender

If your last test was a routine pap test and it was normal, you can wait three years before getting an HPV test. If your first routine HPV test is normal, you can wait five years before getting another one.

WHAT IF YOU HAD A HYSTERECTOMY?

A hysterectomy is a surgery that removes your uterus. Sometimes it also removes your cervix. If you still have your cervix, you should keep getting HPV tests. Talk to your healthcare provider if you do not have your cervix. They can tell you if you need HPV tests and how often.

WHO SHOULD GET HPV TESTS MORE OFTEN?

Some people need to get HPV tests every three years regardless of their age. This includes people who:

- Had treatment for abnormal cells on their cervix before
- Have a weak immune system because of any of these reasons
- Had an organ transplant
- Take medicine that lowers their immune system for three years or more
- Have HIV/AIDS
- Have kidney failure and need dialysis
- Have lupus

WHEN TO STOP HPV TESTS?

You can stop getting HPV tests if you are age 66 or older and you had normal tests for 10 years before that (from age 56 to 65). This means you had:

- Two HPV tests in a row that were negative, or
- Three pap tests in a row that were negative, or
- One HPV test and two pap tests that were all negative

If you are age 66 or older and you did not have normal tests for 10 years, keep getting HPV tests until you do.

HOW DO HPV TESTS WORK?

HPV tests are done like pap tests. A doctor, nurse practitioner, or registered nurse takes a small sample of cells from your vagina or cervix. Or you can choose to take your own sample. Use the instruction sheet provided with a self screening kit to do your own sample. You can do self screening in a clinician’s office or your own home (or a private place where you are most comfortable). The lab checks the sample for HPV types that can cause cancer. The self-screening kit will become widely available in medical offices by the end of 2025.

WHAT DO HPV TEST RESULTS MEAN?

Usually, your test will be normal. This means you don’t have HPV. You can keep getting HPV tests every five years. If your test is not normal, this means you have HPV. This does not mean you have cancer. Your health care provider will tell you what to do next. You may need to get another HPV test in 12 months or see a specialist for more tests.

*See your healthcare provider if you have any of these problems, even if your last HPV test was normal:*

- Bleeding or discharge from your vagina that is not normal
- Pain or discomfort when you have sex
- Pain in your lower back or pelvis

