

Some women who choose not to have a doctor or nurse collect the Cervical Screening Test may be eligible to take the sample themselves.

This is called a self-collected Cervical Screening Test.

What is a self-collected Cervical Screening Test?

A self-collected Cervical Screening Test is when a woman uses a swab to take a sample from the vagina for cervical screening. This test is done in a healthcare setting behind a screen or in the bathroom.

You **may** be eligible for a self-collected Cervical Screening Test if:

- you are aged 30 years or over; and
- you are overdue for a Cervical Screening Test by two years, or have never been screened; and
- you have said no to a Cervical Screening Test taken by a health professional.

Not all women are eligible for a self-collected Cervical Screening Test so it is important that you speak to your doctor or nurse first.

For more information

Call Cancer Council Victoria on **13 11 20** or visit www.cancer.org.au/cervicalscreening

To book a Cervical Screening Test talk to your doctor or nurse.

If you have a history of sexual assault or abuse and need support please contact the Sexual Assault Crisis Line on **1800 806 292**.



If you would like to speak to someone in your own language, please call 13 14 50 and ask for Cancer Council Victoria or the Sexual Assault Crisis Line.



Cervical screening after sexual assault: your right to important health care



Cervical cancer and the human papillomavirus (HPV)

Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable cancers and often has no symptoms. Most cervical cancer is caused by HPV, a very common virus. This virus is passed on by sexual contact and can infect both men and women.

How is HPV detected?

A Cervical Screening Test is the best way to look for HPV infection, which may over time, develop into cancer if not treated.

A doctor or nurse can provide a Cervical Screening Test.

Do I need a Cervical Screening Test?

If you are a woman or have a cervix, and aged 25 to 74, it is recommended that you have a Cervical Screening Test every five years.

You need Cervical Screening Tests even after the HPV vaccination or menopause. Some women who have had a hysterectomy will still need screening.

Cervical screening and sexual assault

Some women who have a history of sexual assault or abuse may be reminded of the experience by gynaecological procedures such as the Cervical Screening Test and may avoid regular cervical screening.

Feelings of anxiety, shame, embarrassment, fear and vulnerability are very common as well as physical discomfort.

Some women may find it helpful to know the following:

- Your consultation will be **private** and **confidential**.
- You can ask for a **female nurse** or **doctor**.

- **You can request** to see a healthcare professional with knowledge in screening women who have experienced sexual assault or abuse. Contact CASA Intake Line on 03 9928 8749.
- If you **feel comfortable**, disclose your history of sexual assault to the healthcare professional as it may help them better understand how to help you through the appointment.
- You have a **right to ask** the nurse or doctor to **explain the test** to you, **show you the equipment** they will use, and **ask** as many **questions** as you need.
- **You can ask** for more than one appointment or a longer appointment time (for example, the first visit to familiarise yourself with the healthcare providers, procedures and instruments, and the second appointment for the test itself).
- **If you prefer, you can insert the speculum yourself** and ask the nurse or doctor to stand at the side of the examination bed (rather than at the end).
- **You are in control** and can ask for the test to **stop** or **pause** at any time.
- **You can ask** the nurse or doctor for a **sheet to put over you**.
- **You can bring a friend** or support person to the appointment.
- **Take a few breaths** to help you relax.
- You can ask to **see a counsellor** or ask for additional support if required.