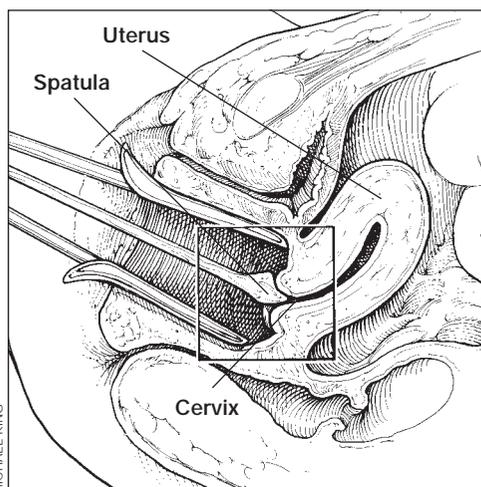




FROM
YOUR DOCTOR



Why Pap smears are important



The facts

- ❑ A Pap smear is a helpful test that detects changes in your body that can lead to cancer of the cervix.
- ❑ Most cancer of the cervix is detected in women who have never

had a Pap smear or in women who have not had a Pap smear in a long time.

- ❑ If changes in the cervix are found early, they can be treated before they ever develop into cancer.

- ❑ If cervical cancer is found early, it can be cured.

How is it done?

- ❑ The doctor takes a sample of cells from your cervix with a spatula (see the drawing) and sends it to a laboratory to be read under a microscope.
- ❑ Having a pelvic exam does not mean that you have had a Pap smear. Your doctor should let you know that a Pap test is being done.

Why does it help?

Cervical cancer takes many years to develop. The Pap test notices changes in your body that are early signs of cancer. This allows time to prevent or treat cancer.

How often?

- ❑ You should have a Pap smear as soon as you become sexually

active. To begin with, you should have a Pap smear every year.

- ❑ If you have normal Pap smears for three years in a row, your doctor may recommend that you have the test less often—maybe every 2-3 years.

- ❑ It's important to have regular Pap smears. No one Pap smear is perfect.

- ❑ If the Pap test shows that something is abnormal, it is important to return to the doctor for treatment.

You are at risk for cervical cancer if you . . .

- ❑ Started having sexual intercourse at an early age
- ❑ Have more than one sex partner, or your male sex partners have had multiple sex partners
- ❑ Have ever had genital warts or a genital herpes infection
- ❑ Have HIV infection
- ❑ A history of other sexually transmitted diseases
- ❑ Are a smoker
- ❑ Abuse alcohol or other substances
- ❑ Have had abnormal Pap smears in the past.