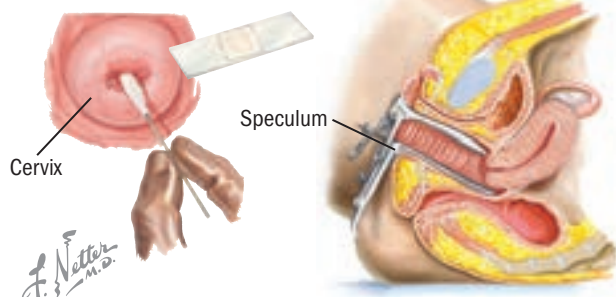
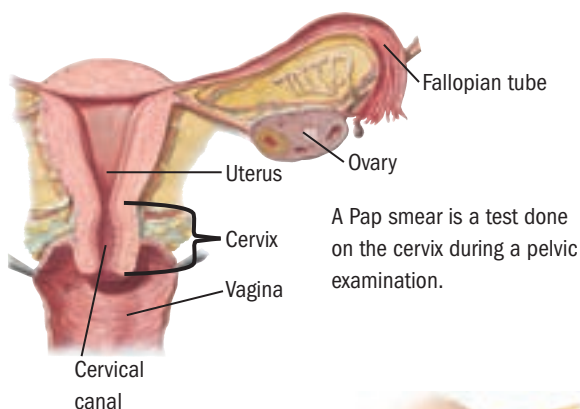
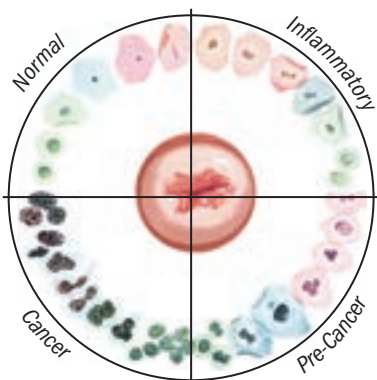


# UNDERSTANDING YOUR PAP SMEAR ABNORMALITIES



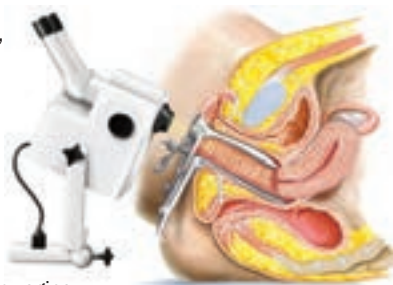
Your health care provider will place a speculum into your vagina. This tool holds open the vaginal walls and lets the health care provider see inside. Your health care provider will gently rub a swab or spatula around and inside the cervix to get a sample of cells. The sample is smeared onto a glass slide and sent to a laboratory for testing.

## Types of cells in a normal cervix and in inflammation, precancer, and cancer



An abnormal Pap smear means that you may have inflammation, infection, or cancer of the cervix.

After one abnormal Pap smear, your health care provider will probably do another in a few weeks. Other tests such as colposcopy may be done. In this test, your doctor uses a colposcope (which has a magnifying lens) to look closely at the cervix through the vagina. Small pieces of abnormal tissue may be removed and sent for study.



## What Are Pap Smear Abnormalities?

The Pap smear is a test done during a pelvic examination. Cells from the cervix, which is the opening of the uterus, are removed and checked at a laboratory. To do this test, the health care provider places a small tool called a speculum into the vagina. This tool holds open the vaginal walls and lets the health care provider see the cervix and vagina. The health care provider gently rubs a swab or spatula around and inside the cervix to get a sample. The sample is smeared onto a glass slide and sent for testing. The Pap smear test shows how the female hormone estrogen affects the cervix and vagina. It also shows whether the cervix has an infection or abnormal cells.

## What Causes Pap Smear Abnormalities?

An abnormal Pap smear may be caused by inflammation, infection, or cancer of the cervix.

## What Are the Symptoms of Pap Smear Abnormalities?

An abnormal Pap smear doesn't cause symptoms, but some discomfort may be felt during the pelvic examination.

## How Are Pap Smear Abnormalities Diagnosed?

After one abnormal Pap smear, the health care provider will probably do another in a few weeks. Other tests such as colposcopy may also be done. In a colposcopy, the doctor uses a colposcope (an instrument with a magnifying lens) to look closely at the cervix through the opening of the vagina. Small samples of tissue that looks abnormal may be removed and sent for testing.

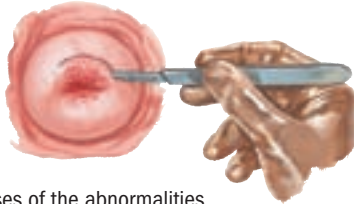
## UNDERSTANDING YOUR PAP SMEAR ABNORMALITIES



Your doctor may freeze, burn, or use a laser to destroy abnormal tissue, or use the loop electrosurgical excisional procedure (LEEP). LEEP uses a thin wire loop attached to an electrical unit. All these treatments can be done in your doctor's office.

For more serious cases, your doctor may do a cone biopsy.

A cone-shaped piece of the cervix, with all abnormal cells, is removed and checked for causes of the abnormalities. Your doctor cuts the tissue out with a surgical knife, cautery (burning) tool, laser, or wire loop.



Use a condom during sex to protect yourself against infection.

Don't smoke. Smoking may increase your risk of getting cancer of the cervix.



Have a regular Pap smear. If you are sexually active or are 18 or older, you should have periodic Pap smears at least until age 65.

Call your health care provider if you have severe pain or bleeding after the Pap smear.



### FROM THE DESK OF

### NOTES

### How Are Pap Smear Abnormalities Treated?

A few women need treatment, which depends on the cause of the abnormalities. To destroy abnormal tissue, the doctor may use freezing, burning, a laser, or the loop electrosurgical excisional procedure (LEEP). LEEP uses a thin wire loop attached to an electrical unit.

For more serious abnormalities, the doctor may do a cone biopsy. A cone-shaped piece of the cervix, with all abnormal cells, is removed and checked for causes of the abnormality. The doctor cuts the tissue out with a surgical knife, cautery (burning tool), laser, or wire loop.

### DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Pap Smear Abnormalities:

- ✓ **DO** have a regular Pap smear. If you're sexually active or are 18 years old or older, you should have a Pap smear yearly, or more often if you're at high risk for getting cervical cancer, at least until age 65. This way, you can find abnormalities very early, when treatment is most effective.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if you have severe pain or bleeding after the Pap smear.
- ✓ **DO** schedule your Pap smear between your periods. Menstrual blood can make the Pap smear less accurate. Also, don't douche before you have a Pap smear. Douching can change Pap smear results.
- ✓ **DO** use a condom during sex to avoid infection. A diaphragm doesn't protect you as well.
- ⊘ **DON'T** douche before having your Pap smear.
- ⊘ **DON'T** smoke. Smoking may increase your risk of getting cervical cancer.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

#### Contact the following sources:

- American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
Tel: (202) 638-5577  
**Website:** <http://www.acog.org>
- National Cancer Institute  
Tel: (800) 4-CANCER (422-6237)  
**Website:** <http://www.cancer.gov>
- National Women's Health Network  
Tel: (202) 628-7814  
**Website:** <http://www.nwhn.org>