



Premier Care for Women

Health Care for Women by Women

ABNORMAL PAPS

The Pap test is known as a screening test because it helps identify people who need further evaluation. The Pap test can detect changes in the cells of the cervix at an early stage. For most women, a Pap test done each year, starting at age 18 or sooner if they become sexually active, is the best screening method for finding changes in the cervix.

For the test, a speculum is placed in the vagina and a sample of cells is taken from the cervix. These cells are then spread onto a glass slide and given to a lab for analysis. Sometimes the Pap test may need to be repeated. This does not always mean something is wrong, but it may happen if there is an infection or if too few cells were collected. If the Pap test does show abnormal cells, your doctor or nurse will explain the results to you. You may be advised to have further tests to diagnose the problem.

Dysplasia is a type of cervical disorder which occurs when there is a change in the cells on the surface of the cervix. Normal, noncancerous cells are replaced by abnormal cells. These changes are called dysplasia. Dysplasia is found in women of all ages, but it is becoming more common in young women and teenagers. Women at risk for dysplasia include those who have genital warts, those with more than one sexual partner, those who first had sex before age 20, and those who smoke.

The range of dysplasia includes mild, moderate, severe dysplasia and carcinoma in situ. Although not a true form of cancer, is the most likely to develop into cancer if not treated.

Colposcopy is the next test performed if a Pap test is abnormal and dysplasia may be suspected. It is a way of looking at the cervix through a special magnifying instrument called a colposcope. It lets your doctor detect problems of the cervix that cannot be seen with the naked eye alone.