

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

Member blog – Cancer

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-BLOG-

Cervical Cancer - It's time to catch up

[DURING NOVEMBER] This week is Cervical Cancer Awareness Week. It's an important reminder to ensure you're up to date with screening.

Throughout the pandemic, many people have fallen behind with health checks and cervical screening is no exception. If you haven't had a check in the last couple of years, it may be time to catch up. Our life insurance partner, [TAL](#) has shared some important information on cervical cancer and what to expect at you screening appointment.

What is cervical cancer?

Cervical cancer begins when abnormal cells in the lining of the cervix grow uncontrollably. It may then spread to other parts of the reproductive system or to other parts of the body.

There are often no symptoms in the early stages of the disease. Later symptoms may include vaginal bleeding, unusual discharges or lower back and pelvic pain. Virtually all cases of cervical cancer are associated with human papillomavirus (HPV) infection¹.

Why is screening so important?

The good news is, when detected early, cervical cancer has an excellent prognosis. In low-income countries, it's one of the most common causes of cancer death², however in developed countries, such as Australia, the use of cervical cancer screening programs has led to a dramatic decrease in the rates of cervical cancer¹. The National Cervical Screening Program aims to detect precancerous abnormalities in people without symptoms, so reducing the illness and deaths caused as a result of the disease. Since the program's introduction in 1991, the incidence of cervical cancer has halved¹.

Changes to screening

If you haven't had a screening procedure for a while, you may find that the process has changed since your last test. Two-yearly Pap tests have now been replaced by five-yearly Cervical Screening Tests (CST). A CST looks for HPV, the virus known to cause almost all cervical cancers. People who should participate in the CST program include women or people with a cervix aged between 25 and 74 years.

What to expect

Cervical screening is done through healthcare providers in a range of centres and clinics across Australia. There are two options for the CST:

- You can collect your own sample using a simple swab
- Your healthcare provider can collect a sample

Those who would prefer a female health professional to do their test are able to request this. The [National Cancer Screening Register](#) stores electronic records for each person who has undergone cervical screening and sends reminders when you are next due.

HPV vaccination

One of the best ways to prevent cervical cancer is through an [HPV vaccination](#). The vaccination prevents infection with the most common cancer-causing strains of HPV. It's most effective if given to individuals under the age of 15 with two doses, at least 6 months apart. Speak with your doctor if you'd like information about the HPV vaccine for older people.

Want to find out more?

If you are due for a test or would like more information, speak with your doctor or contact the [National Cervical Screening program](#).

1. Cervical cancer in Australia (2022). Cancer Council Australia
2. World Cancer Report (2020). World Health Organization

-ENDS-

DISCLAIMER [please add to your post]

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