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## Cervical screening tests

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### Summary

- Cervical cancer is largely preventable through regular screening
  - On 1 December 2017, the cervical screening test replaced the Pap test.
  - The cervical screening test is effective because it detects the human papillomavirus (HPV).
  - The cervical screening test protects up to 30 per cent more women than the Pap test.
  - The HPV vaccine does not protect against all types of HPV infection known to cause cervical cancer, so continue having regular screens.
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### The National Cervical Screening Program

The National Cervical Screening Program in Victoria aims to prevent and detect cervical cancer early through regular cervical screening. Based on new evidence and improved technology, the renewed National Cervical Screening Program was introduced on 1 December 2017. In summary:

- On 1 December 2017, the cervical screening test replaced the Pap test.
- People aged 25 to 74 years are eligible to participate in the National Cervical Screening Program (NCSP).
- The cervical screening test protects up to 30 per cent more women than the Pap test.
- The test is more effective because it detects the human papillomavirus (HPV).
- Human papillomavirus, also known as HPV, is a common virus that can cause cervical cell abnormalities that in rare cases may develop into cervical cancer.
- If you are 25 or older your first Cervical Screening Test is due two years after your last Pap test, if your result was normal.
- The way the test is done won't change, it will feel the same as the Pap test.
- Once you have had your first Cervical Screening Test, you'll only need to have one every five years, instead of every two (if your results are normal and you do not have HPV).
- Five yearly screening is safe. This is because it usually takes 10 to 15 years for a persistent HPV infection to develop into cervical cancer.
- HPV is so common that many people have it at some point in their lives and never know it, as there are usually no symptoms. Most HPV infections are cleared naturally by the body's immune system within one to two years without causing problems.
- Even if you have received the HPV vaccine, you still need to be regularly screened as the vaccine does not protect against all types of HPV infection known to cause cervical cancer.
- If at any age you have any symptoms such as unusual bleeding, discharge or pain see your healthcare provider immediately.

### For more information

For more information speak with your healthcare provider, or visit [National Cervical & Screening Program](#) or call **1800 627 701**.

For information visit the [National Cervical Screening Register](#)

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DHHS - Screening and Cancer Prevention

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