

Cervical Cancer Screening is Changing

Better protection, less testing

On 1st December 2017, the 2 yearly Pap smear will be replaced by 5 yearly cervical screening.

A SUCCESS STORY

The introduction of the National Cervical Screening Program in 1991 is one of the great Australian public success stories. In just over 20 years, cervical cancer diagnosis and deaths have decreased by approximately 50%.¹

WHY CHANGE?

- In the 20 years since the Pap smear program was introduced we now have developed a better understanding of cervical cancer and how it develops.
- Technology and methods for detecting Human papillomavirus are now more effective than the traditional method.
- We now have a far greater understanding of age appropriate screening ranges and intervals.
- Under the new cervical cancer screening program the number of screening tests most women will undergo in a lifetime would drop from 26 to approximately 10.
- Evidence shows that this new cervical cancer screening approach will reduce cervical cancer rates even further.

>>> CONTINUED OVERLEAF

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Starting from 1st December 2017:

- Women over the age of 25 will be invited by the National Cancer Screening Register to participate in the National Cervical Screening Program.
- The time between tests will change from 2 to 5 years.
- The cervical screening program will be available to women between the ages of 25 and 74 years.
- Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccinated women **still** require cervical screening as the HPV vaccine does not protect against all the types of HPV that may cause cervical cancer.
- Women of any age who have symptoms such as unusual bleeding, discharge or pain should see their health care professional immediately.

HOW IS A SAMPLE COLLECTED?

The procedure for collecting the sample for cervical cancer screening is the same as the procedure for having a Pap smear.

WHAT DO I DO UNTIL THEN?

- The National Cervical Screening Program will send the usual reminder letters to inform women when they are due for their regular cervical screen.
- These new cervical cancer screening tests do not come into effect until 1st December 2017.

REFERENCES

1: NHMRC (2005) Screening to prevent Cervical Cancer: Guidelines for the management of asymptomatic women with screen detected abnormalities. NHMRC 2005. Accessible from www.nhmrc.gov.au

For further information, please see your doctor.

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