

Screening of Cervical Screening

Cervical screening is a diagnostic test employed to detect cancerous changes in the cells your cervix. Early detection and prevention are essential to stop cancer even before it sets a foot.

Simply called a smear or a Pap smear, this test is performed to pick up abnormal cells in your cervix which can potentially turn cancerous. It is usually performed in women under an age bracket of 24 to 50. Chances of cancer are higher in sexually active population. It is nil in women who have undergone hysterectomy. This is a screening test meaning it is performed even in the absence of symptoms. On the other hand, if you have symptoms like vaginal bleed, discharge or anything of that nature, make sure to consult your doctor at the earliest.

The decision

As with every decision, this too requires a risk-benefit analysis.

Pros:

- Detection and prevention of one of the most prevalent cancer in women.
- Quick, easy and relatively inexpensive.

Risks:

- Wrong results owing to negligence or genuine errors.
- These abnormal cells might not always turn cancerous, hence, the treatment given after diagnosis is in vain.

Preparation

The ideal time to perform the test is between two periods. If you bleed during the test, it needs to be performed again on a different date. Chemically acting contraceptives (jellies, spermicides) are to be avoided 24 hours before the test as they ginger the results.

The test

The test is quick, usually performed within minutes. You are required to undress below your waist. Lie on the bed on your back with your legs spread wide, knees apart but ankles together. This test usually won't inflict any pain. The test is postponed in pregnancy up until 3 months after your baby is born.

Results and interpretation

- 90% of the test results in a population are **negative** meaning you're normal.
- An **unsatisfactory** result is obtained when the number of abnormal cells in the sample are below insufficient for diagnosis.
- An **abnormal** result is obtained if your cells undergo changes but haven't made it to the cancer stage yet.
- **Borderline** or **mild** changes normally won't lead to the disease. Such cells mostly regain normalcy.
- **Moderate** or **severe** changes also don't usually progress for cancer. A colposcopy is performed to assess the need for treatment.

After the test

No rest is required after the test. Usual activities shall be pursued after the test.

Frequently asked questions

1 – Can I have a cervical screening after I pick up an infection?

Answer: Yes, this generally doesn't affect the test results apart from occasionally diagnosing the infection as well.

2 – Do I need a cervical screening test if I currently don't have a sexual partner?

Answer: Yes, cervical screening test is a must do.

3 – How are abnormal cells treated?

Answer: The aim of treatment is to either repair the damaged cells or remove the area where these cells lie. A number of treatment options are available such as cone biopsy, chemotherapy, radiotherapy, large loop excision of transformation zone (LLETZ).

Resources

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Feedback

We hope that this information on cervical screening helped you to know something new or has improved your knowledge on a topic you are aware of. To know more or to lend feedback of any nature, feel free to write to us.