

About HPV

What is HPV?

HPV, or human papillomavirus, is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the world. There are more than 100 different types of HPV that may cause a variety of diseases ranging from warts to cancer.

What about HPV and cancer?

Certain HPV types, called high-risk, are associated with the development of cervical cancer. While most HPV infections go away on their own, they sometimes persist. Persistent infections with high-risk HPV are associated with an increased risk of developing cervical cancer.

How widespread is HPV infection?

HPV is so common that most people will get it at some point in their lives; however, the viral infection usually clears up by itself and causes no signs or symptoms at all.

Is HPV infection a necessary precursor to cervical cancer?

Yes. HPV can be detected in virtually all cases of cervical cancer. It is generally accepted that the virus is necessary for development of cancer, and that all cases of this cancer can be attributed to HPV infection. If someone tests negative for high-risk HPV, it is unlikely they will develop cervical cancer unless they subsequently acquire an infection with high-risk HPV.

About the HPV Test

Why is it important to be tested for HPV infection?

Cervical cancer is strongly associated with high-risk HPV infection. Identifying the virus can shed light on the cause of abnormal cells seen during a Pap test and help identify women who may require further tests. A positive result for any of the high-risk types can be closely monitored for any pre-cancerous conditions. A negative test for high-risk HPV can provide peace of mind that you are at lower risk for developing cervical cancer.

How is the HPV test done?

Cells are removed from the cervix in the same way they are removed for a Pap test. They are collected into a liquid and sent to LifeLabs to look for HPV DNA (HPV genes).

How does HPV testing differ from Pap testing?

The Pap test or Pap smear, looks for abnormal cells in the cervix that could lead to cancer. The HPV test looks for the virus that causes cervical cancer. The test is a sensitive, non-invasive DNA-based method that can detect 13 types of high-risk HPV. The HPV test can detect the virus that causes cervical cancer even before any changes can be seen in the cells of the cervix.

What are the advantages of HPV testing over Pap testing?

HPV testing is the most sensitive indicator of cervical cancer risk, up to 40% more sensitive than the traditional Pap test. The traditional Pap test is extremely valuable, and it has had a dramatic effect on reducing cervical cancer. However, recent studies show that HPV testing is even more sensitive than the traditional Pap test for identification of women at risk for the development of cervical cancer. Studies show that the HPV test complements the Pap test, and the two tests used together are highly effective for detection of cervical cancer.

What will I learn from this test?

A LifeLabs HPV test will tell you whether you have been infected with a virus that can cause cervical cancer. If your test is negative for high-risk HPV, your chances of developing cervical cancer are low. If you test positive for high-risk HPV, you are at increased risk for development of cervical cancer. Please consult with your healthcare provider who can advise you on the most appropriate course of action.

If I find out I have HPV, can it be treated?

There is no specific treatment for HPV infection. However, there are treatments for pre-cancerous conditions that may result from HPV infection if they are detected early. There are steps you can take for early detection including having regular Pap tests that can help reduce your risk of developing cervical cancer. Please discuss with your healthcare provider.



When should an HPV test be done?

Women over 30 who wish to know their HPV status can request the test. HPV testing is recommended in the event of an abnormal Pap test to confirm an uncertain result. HPV testing is generally not recommended for women under 30 because the HPV infection may go away on its own.

How do I get tested?

Visit your healthcare provider to discuss the HPV test. If the HPV test is right for you, your doctor will provide you with a standard outpatient requisition with "HPV" written in the section "Other Tests". Take the requisition to LifeLabs where a collection kit will be provided. Your healthcare provider will use the collection kit to take a sample of cervical cells for testing.

Is there a charge for the test?

The HPV test is not covered by the medical services plan (MSP) but may be covered by your extended health plan. You will be charged \$90. The fee must be paid at the time you visit LifeLabs to obtain a specimen collection kit.

How do I pay for the service?

Payment may be made by Visa, MasterCard, debit, cash or cheque. The fee must be paid before testing can be done.

Can I get reimbursed by my insurer?

HPV testing is covered by some extended health plans, check with your provider.

How do I get my results and how long will it take?

There are 2 ways to get your results. You can make an appointment to discuss your results with your doctor (recommended), or you can visit www.myhealth.ca and sign up for electronic lab results. Results will be available within 2 weeks of sample collection.

LifeLabs has over 50 years experience serving the healthcare needs of Canadians.

Our laboratory testing services help physicians and other healthcare providers in the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and monitoring of disease and illness in patients. Our tests help to:

- Determine health risks and preventive steps;
- Diagnose and detect the onset of disease;
- Identify suitable treatments and reactions; and
- Monitor and adjust treatments as required.

Every year across Canada LifeLabs:

- Sees over 10 million patients
- Conducts over 50 million lab tests
- Provides service to nearly 20,000 physicians

We care about helping patients and physicians and we use our knowledge of laboratory medicine to help identify the right course of action to improve healthcare outcomes.



For more information please contact LifeLabs:

- toll free at 1-800-663-9422
- email Contract.Service@lifelabs.com
- or visit our website at www.lifelabs.com

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Human Papillomavirus (HPV) & Cervical Cancer



It's Better to Know



A Test to Assess Risk of Cervical Cancer

LifeLabs Medical Laboratory Services offers a test to determine risk of cervical cancer by screening for high risk Human Papillomavirus (HPV), the virus that causes cervical cancer. Ask your doctor if it is right for you

