

Cervical abnormalities

Cervical abnormalities highlight early changes to the cells in the cervix, caused by an HPV infection.

Many abnormalities resolve by themselves, however if left untreated, they have the potential to develop into cervical cancer.

There are three different types of abnormalities:

Atypia:

Your cervical cells have only changed slightly. Sometimes, these abnormal cells can regress back to normal without treatment; however, they can also worsen. Atypia can be caused by infection or irritation, and does not necessarily mean that you have, or will get cancer.

Squamous abnormalities:

The squamous cells in your cervix have abnormalities. Abnormal cells are called SIL (squamous intraepithelial lesions) and are either classified as LSIL (low grade) or HSIL (high grade). In the past, abnormalities used to be called CIN (cervical intraepithelial neoplasia),



You will usually be advised to return for cervical screening in 12 months to monitor low-risk cell changes

with low-grade abnormalities classified as CIN 1 and high-grade abnormalities as CIN 2 or 3. Low-grade abnormalities (LSIL or CIN 1) may disappear without treatment, however, further testing is usually recommended. High-grade abnormalities (HSIL or CIN 2/CIN 3) are pre-cancerous, meaning that they can progress to cervical cancer if not treated.

Glandular abnormalities:

The glandular/columnar cells in your cervix have abnormalities. These abnormalities may be pre-cancerous or cancerous, so they will need to be assessed further.

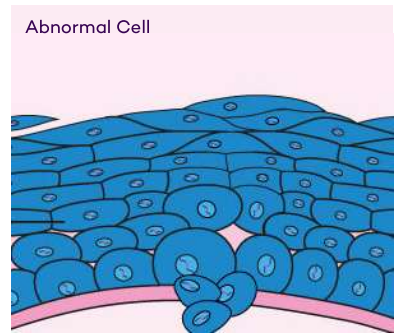
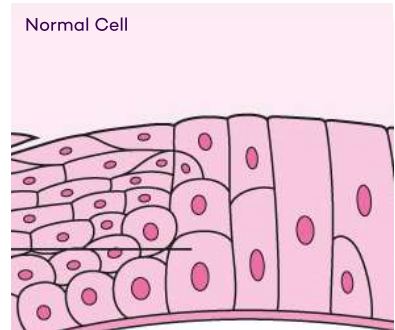


Image: Normal cells compared to abnormal cells in the cervix.
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Casie's Story

Location: NSW
Age at diagnosis: 20s

The beginning of my journey:

I was afraid of having a CST done, as my mum had CIN 3 pre-cancer and a partial hysterectomy. I didn't know much about it. When I decided to have my first CST, I was told that my results showed abnormal cells, and I would have to wait a year. After the second CST, I was referred to a gynaecologist for a colposcopy and a biopsy, to rule out cervical cancer. I was told that a golf ball sized lesion was removed. I went to my check up and everything was fine. My gynaecologist informed me it was like "I hadn't even had a procedure done on my cervix."

Why I was surprised by my diagnosis:

I never thought that this would happen to me. I was terrified, as I wanted to be able to have children in the future.

My ongoing battle:

Another year later, I found out that I had abnormal cells again and I was at medium risk of developing cervical cancer. However, as of my last check-up, HPV was not detected. I am now waiting to see if my body can clear the abnormal cells before proceeding with other treatment. Unlike last time, I have a more positive outlook on my future.

My tips for Australian women about cervical health:

Go get regular CSTs. If there are any vaginal health changes that you may be worried about, go to the doctor and don't put it off. You may be uncomfortable for a couple of minutes just getting a check, but at least you'll have peace of mind.