For Women &
People with a cervix

Cervical Screening Comfort Checklist

For a more comfortable cervical screening experience

Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable cancers. Having regular Cervical Screening Tests is the best way to protect yourself.

You should have a Cervical Screening Test every five years if you are a woman or person with a cervix aged between 25 and 74 years and have ever had any sexual contact.

This list was developed to help you have a comfortable screening experience. It aims to educate and empower you by providing advice on how to best prepare for screening and by explaining what to expect from your health professional.

Simple steps to ensure your comfort:

Make an appointment:

- ❑ Make an appointment with your doctor or reproductive health clinic at a time that suits you.
- ❑ When you call to make your booking, make sure you say it is for a Cervical Screening Test so the right length appointment can be booked. You can request a female provider if you like.
- ❑ Try not to book your appointment for when you have your period.

Prepare by doing the following:

- ❑ Read information on cervical screening so you know what to expect. Your health professional can collect your sample, or you can collect your own sample. Both choices are accurate and safe. https://accf.org.au/know-your-cervix/prevention/#cervical_screening
- ❑ If you have been through menopause, you might like to ask about using an oestrogen cream in your vagina in the week before your appointment to make the test more comfortable.
- ❑ Wear loose comfortable clothing – you may need to remove clothing from waist down.
- ❑ Empty your bladder before you arrive at the clinic or ask to use the toilet when you arrive.
- ❑ Try to stay as relaxed as possible – this will help minimise any discomfort. For example, try to take some long slow and deep breaths.
- ❑ Make a list of any questions you have for the doctor.

Expect the following from your health professional:

- ❑ An option to have a support person present e.g. relative/friend/clinic nurse.
- ❑ The choice to have your health professional collect your sample or to collect your own sample.
- ❑ An easy to understand explanation of what to expect in your screening choice.
- ❑ If you choose to have your health professional collect your sample, you can expect:
  - privacy to undress and dress and a sheet to drape across your stomach and thighs
  - sterilised medical instruments (at a comfortable temperature) to take a sample
  - easy to understand instructions during the procedure and reassurance. You can ask the health professional questions and ask them to stop at any time.
- ❑ If you choose to collect your own sample, you can expect:
  - a private place to take the sample
  - clear instructions about how to do the test and help if you need it.

After your test:

- ❑ You will be given privacy to dress and provided with tissues, a sanitary pad, and handwashing facilities (if needed).
- ❑ If you need any personal assurance, you can ask questions regarding your genitals/reproductive organs.
- ❑ Feel free to ask when and how your results will be provided (generally within two weeks). You can call your health professional to check your results if you are concerned.
- ❑ If any abnormalities are found, your health professional will talk to you about your recommended next steps.
- ❑ Make sure your contact details are up to date so you can receive your results and any recommended follow-up.

For information about the Comfort Checklist please visit www.accf.org.au/cervical-health/prevention/comfort-checklist
or call 1300 727 630 (within Australia) or (07) 3177 1099

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