

“I’m really looking forward to my first pelvic exam and Pap smear.” - no human being ever

Public Cervix Announcement



NOT FUN, BUT VERY IMPORTANT. Since the uterus, cervix and ovaries are on the inside of the body, a pelvic exam is necessary to make sure that they are healthy and in the right place. During a pelvic exam, tests can also be done to check for cancer of the cervix (the entrance to the uterus), and for infections. The test for cancer of the cervix is called a Pap smear. (Pap smears save lives!)

We get it. Most people agree that this exam is kind of awkward and a little embarrassing. You may feel some pressure and it may be a bit uncomfortable, but it should not be painful.

- **The pelvic exam, including a Pap smear, only takes a few minutes. Seriously. You got this.**
- **The NP will tell you what she’s going to do before she does it. If you ask her to stop, she will stop.**
- **If you want someone to be in the exam room to provide emotional support, just ask.**
- **Nothing happens in this building without your consent.**

Here’s what to expect:

First we check your vitals – height, weight, blood pressure, temperature – and review your health history. We can show you a speculum. We may have you give us a urine sample in the bathroom for STD/other tests.

Next you’ll go to an exam room where you’ll undress from the waist down (you can leave your socks on) and undo your bra if you’re also having a breast exam. There’s a paper sheet to put over your lap.

The NP will be happy to answer your questions. No worries. We’re here to help, not judge, and it’s all kept private.

The NP will listen to your heart and lungs, and check your neck and belly for any lumps or pain. She will do a breast exam if you want her to. Next you’ll be asked to lie down and slide to the end of the table. (It feels like you’re going to fall off, but you’re not.) You spread your knees apart and put your feet into foot rests which hold your legs up and apart. The paper sheet will be draped over your knees.

Take slow, deep breaths and RELAX your mind and your muscles. Imagine your hips and lower back melting into the exam table. The exam will be more comfortable and will go by more quickly the more you can relax. You got this.

First, the NP will do an exam around the outside of the vagina – the vulva. Next is the exam on the inside of the vagina. To do this, she must gently separate the walls of your vagina just a little with a speculum. (Did you know that the walls of the vagina touch if there isn’t anything inside of it?) Your vagina is a muscle that can stretch. The NP will also use lube on the speculum, so it goes in more easily. **You got this.**

Once the speculum is in place, the NP can see the cervix and can perform a Pap smear to test for cancer of the cervix. For the Pap smear she will use a tiny brush and gently rub some of the cells off of your cervix. The cells are sent to a lab to be tested. The nurse may also gently wipe the cervix with what looks like a Q-tip, if we are testing for other infections like chlamydia, gonorrhea or yeast. The NP will then remove the speculum.

Sometimes, the NP will need to check your ovaries and uterus by doing a bimanual exam. During this exam, she will put one or two lubed, gloved fingers into your vagina while she is pressing down on your lower belly with her other hand. You will feel some pressure, but usually not pain. This exam is not common and is not done unless you are having problems such as abnormal bleeding or pain.

THAT'S IT - YOU'RE DONE!!!

After your exam:

Before you get dressed you may want to wipe with a tissue to remove any extra lube. If you had a Pap smear, you may cramp a little and spot for a day or two. This is normal. If the bleeding is heavy, contact us. If your test results are not normal, we will contact you so that you can take the next steps.

CONGRATULATE YOURSELF!

Taking care of your body and taking control of your sexual health are important to staying healthy as a human being.