A Message to Aboriginal Women
The Role of Aboriginal Women in the Family

Well women are strong women
Aboriginal Women & Cervical Cancer

- Cervical Cancer is a preventable disease.
- Pap tests detect pre-cancerous changes and treatment can PREVENT cancer.
- 85% of women who die from cervical cancer have Never had a Pap test, or have not had regular Pap tests.
- Data from W.A, S.A and N.T suggests cancer of cervix occurs 4-5 times more commonly among ATSI women.
- Evidence from Victoria and South Australia suggest that Aboriginal women are less aware than non-Aboriginal women about Pap tests.
- Cervical cancer may occur if abnormal changes to the cells of the cervix are left untreated.
Where is the Cervix?
The cervix is inside a woman’s body at the bottom of the uterus.
The Uterus is:
• Also called the womb
• Located inside a woman’s body
• Between the bladder and the bowel
• About the size of a clenched fist (when not pregnant)
• Part of a woman’s reproductive system
• The place where a baby grows when the woman is pregnant
The Cervix

- Located at the top of the vagina
- The muscular end of the uterus
- Stretches open to allow a baby to pass through, when a baby is being born
- Allows blood from a woman’s period to pass from the uterus through the cervix and out of the body through the vagina
- Allows sperm to travel through the vagina into the uterus
- Is the part that cells are sampled from when a Pap test is taken
The Vagina

• Is a tube-like canal about 10-15 cm in length
• Is part of the birth canal
• Is where tampons are inserted
• Is where the penis is inserted during sexual intercourse
What is a Pap test?

- A Pap test examines cells taken from the cervix, and picks up early warning signs that can be treated to prevent cervical cancer.

How is a Pap test done?

- Safe test, takes only a few minutes
- Need to lie on your back or side
- Dr or nurse inserts speculum into vagina to see cervix
- Brush/spatula used to sample cells
- Cells put on slide and sent to lab
- Pap test should not hurt
When should women have a Pap test?

• Women between the ages of 18-70 yrs who have ever had sex need a Pap test every two years

Where can Pap test be done?

A Pap Test can be done at:
• Local Doctor
• Women’s Health Clinic
• Aboriginal Medical Service

Contact your local Aboriginal Health Worker for more information
Barriers to Cervical Screening For Aboriginal Women

- Considered “Women’s Business”
- Lack of female doctors
- Shyness/shame/embarrassment
- Lack of knowledge of Pap test
- Fear about the results
- Don’t know when Pap test is due
- Being too busy
- Distance/travel/transport/childcare
- Financial costs
- Issue of STI’s
- Think they don’t need test - too old
- Concerns re confidentiality
What if?

• I’ve gone through change of life? (Menopause)
• I don’t have sex anymore?
• I’ve had a hysterectomy?
• I’ve had my tubes tied?
• What about sexually transmissible infections? (STI’s)
Getting your Pap test results

• It is very important to get your results
• What do I do if the result is abnormal?
• What does an abnormal result mean?
• What happens after an abnormal Pap test?
• The importance of follow-up
What is a Colposcopy?

• A Colposcopy is an examination - shows where the damaged cells are on the cervix and what they look like.

What is a Biopsy?

• A biopsy is a very small piece of tissue usually only a few millimetres in diameter.
Some Treatment Options For The Removal of Abnormal Cervical Cells

1. **Loop Excision**
   This method uses an electric loop to remove the abnormal cells. This method is sometimes called a wire loop excision, LEEP or LLETZ.

2. **Laser Treatment**
   This method uses the heat from a laser beam to destroy the abnormal cells.

3. **Diathermy**
   This method uses heat carried in a wire to remove the abnormal cells.

4. **Cryosurgery**
   This method uses freezing to destroy the abnormal cells.

5. **Cone Biopsy**
   This treatment removes a small cone shaped piece of tissue from the cervix. It is also used to provide a larger sample for assessment.
• Where do I go for treatment?

• I.P.T.A.A.S

• Will I have to stay overnight?

• Why do I have to see the Dr. again?

• The NSW Pap Test Register
WELL WOMEN ARE STRONG WOMEN