WHERE CAN A PAP SMEAR BE DONE?

It can be done by a doctor or a trained health care professional at a local clinic or hospital. Your private doctor can also perform a Pap smear.

FOLLOW-UP IS IMPORTANT

Most Pap smear results are normal.
- The doctor will contact you if yours is not normal.
- Not all abnormal cells are cancerous
- The nurse will tell you when to come back for your results
- They will advise you if any treatment or referral is necessary.

Follow-up is important for:
- Any abnormal results.
- Early diagnosis.
- Early treatment.
- Preventing the cancer from spreading to other parts of the body.

EXPLANATION OF WORDS

Uterus - Womb
Cervix - Opening to the uterus at the top of the vagina/neck of the womb.
Speculum - Instrument used during a Pap Smear. This is used to open the vagina so that the doctor or nurse can see the cervix and take cells from it.
Normal Cells - Cells that are in perfect health.
Abnormal cells - Cells that show changes which may signify disease.
Cancerous Cells - Cells that are unhealthy and are irregular. If these are not treated, the cancer can spread to the rest of the body and eventually cause death.
Laboratory - A room that contains special scientific equipment.
Diagnosis - Identifying what is wrong with someone.
Screening - Examination of the cells at prescribed intervals to detect possible abnormalities.

EARLY DETECTION IMPROVES THE CHANCES OF SUCCESSFUL TREATMENT

DON'T WAIT FOR THE SYMPTOMS TO APPEAR, HAVE A REGULAR PAP SMEAR!

To find out more about Cervical Cancer, CANSA services, or information relating to cancer, call CANSA toll-free on 0800 22 66 22, write to the Information Centre, CANSA P O Box 2121, Bedfordview, 2008, or visit www.cansa.org.za

CANSA IS HERE TO HELP

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CERVICAL CANCER

REGULAR PAP SMEARS CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE
WHAT IS CANCER OF THE CERVIX?

The cervix is the lower part, or mouth of the uterus (womb).

Cancer of the cervix (also known as cervical cancer) is one of the most common cancers amongst South African women. It is a disease that is curable if detected and treated in its early stages.

RISK FACTORS FOR CERVICAL CANCER

- You do not have regular Pap smears
- You engage in sex before age 15
- You started using oral contraceptives before age 18
- You or your partner have multiple sexual partners
- You have had a sexually transmitted infection
- You are a smoker
- You follow an unhealthy diet low in fruit and vegetables

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT CERVICAL CANCER?

- Have regular Pap smears.
- Have only one sexual partner.
- Use a barrier method of contraception e.g. a condom.

WHAT IS A PAP SMEAR?

A Pap smear is a painless, simple, quick and harmless test that can be done by a doctor or a nurse. This test checks for abnormal cells from the mouth of the cervix. These abnormal cells are not cancer, but if left untreated, may develop into cancer.

HOW IS A PAP SMEAR DONE?

- While you lie on the examination table, the nurse or doctor will look at your vaginal area for signs of infection or other problems.
- The nurse or doctor will slide a speculum into your vagina to open it.
- During the test the nurse or doctor will use a small brush or spatula to take some cells from your cervix and the surrounding area.
- Be sure to ask any questions before the nurse or doctor leaves the room.

WHO SHOULD HAVE A PAP SMEAR?

You should have a Pap Smear if:

- You have ever been sexually active.
- You are older than 30.
- Your last Pap smear was done more than 10 years ago.
- Your last Pap smear was abnormal in any way.
- Your clinic sister or doctor recommends a Pap smear.
- You have abnormal bleeding.

IT IS ADVISABLE TO HAVE REGULAR PAP SMEARS, AT THE VERY LEAST, ONCE EVERY 10 YEARS FROM AGE 30