

The Pelvic Exam and Pap Smear

The pelvic examination is a "check-up" of your vagina (inside and outside), cervix (opening of the uterus) and your fallopian tubes and uterus. Your clinician will look inside the vagina with a speculum (an instrument that lets the clinician see inside the vagina).

During the exam various tests may be done:

Pap smear

Loose cells are gently scraped from the opening of the cervix. This test looks for early changes that may need treatment so that cancer never gets a chance to develop.

Wet mount

Drops of vaginal fluid (discharge) will be collected and looked at under the microscope to check for possible infection (yeast, trichomonas, bacterial vaginosis).

Tests for STDs

Your clinician may do tests for gonorrhea and chlamydia. These may be done from a urine specimen or from swabs touched to the opening of the cervix.

Evaluation

Evaluation for genital warts, herpes, syphilis, and other infections will be done by your clinician by looking carefully at the outside and inside of your vagina. If you have a "sore", other additional tests may be done.

Second part of the exam

The clinician removes the speculum. He/she then puts 2 fingers inside the vagina and presses on your lower belly with the other hand to feel the uterus, fallopian tubes and ovaries. This exam can evaluate for pregnancy, internal infection and ovarian cysts. Both parts of the pelvic examination are not painful.

More details on the "pap smear"

- Once a woman has vaginal sex she should have a "pap" test once a year, along with tests for STDs.
- Between the ages of 14 and 40, the cells on a woman's cervix go through normal changes. Sometimes those changes of the cells are not normal and that is what a pap test picks up. These abnormal changes are usually caused by the wart virus. Most women who have had more than two sexual partner in their life have already been exposed to the wart virus. But only a few of these women develop these abnormal changes.

- You may be asked by letter to return to the clinic for a repeat pap if changes are found. Many of the changes will have gone back to normal and won't need any treatment. If the changes are more serious and/or persistent, we may need to take a closer look at the cervix with a colposcope (magnifying lens).
- The best time for a "pap smear" is before or after your menstrual period. For best results don't douche, use any medication in your vagina, or have vaginal sex for 24 hours before your pap is done.
- A "pap smear" is not the same thing as a pelvic exam, and it is not done every time you have a pelvic exam.
- We suggest that all sexually active women have a yearly check-up which usually includes a breast exam, brief physical exam, tests for STDs and a "pap test".
- Please read our info sheet on genital warts for more info on the genital wart virus.

PLEASE NOTE

It is important to talk to your clinician about what tests are being done. The decision to do certain tests is based on your medical sexual history and your risk factors. At the end of a visit where a pelvic exam is done, find out exactly what tests were done.

For more information about STD's, consult these websites:

<http://www.noah-health.org/>

<http://www.ashastd.org/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/std/>

<http://www.dph.sf.ca.us/sfcityclinic/>

<http://www.sfsi.org/>

WARNING: HIV is also an STD! All STDs are spread by having unsafe sex. When you get infected with an STD, you could also be getting HIV. Protect yourself – use condoms (male or female)!



A landmark in prevention

For a STD check-up or treatment,
see your doctor, local clinic, or come to:

City Clinic
356 Seventh Street
(between Folsom and Harrison)
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415)487-5500

<http://www.dph.sf.ca.us/sfcityclinic/>