

# CST is the new Pap



Family Planning Tasmania  
sexuality education & clinical services

Pap smears have been replaced by an alternative test known as the CST (Cervical Screening Test).

This change is good news for women. It will mean that they will have fewer tests but it will improve early detection and save lives.

## ***New name and age guidelines***

Pap smears have been replaced by CSTs or HPV tests. CST stands for Cervical Screening test, and HPV stands for Human Papilloma virus.

CSTs will start at age 25 and continue until age 75. Women will only need to have the CST every five years.

Pap smears were starting at age 18-20, done every 2 years and stopping at age 70.

## ***Why?***

A lot of information has been learned about cervical cancer in the last 20 years and this new knowledge has led to the development of these changes. The change will increase the detection rate of cervical cancer and at the same time reduce the frequency of cervical screening.

The new test looks for the presence of HPV virus rather than looking for precancerous changes in the cells. It is a more accurate test and can detect potential problems earlier. HPV causes 99% of all cervical cancer.

## ***Same experience***

Having a CST/HPV test feels no different than having a Pap test. It is what happens to the sample after it has been taken that has changed.

## ***How do you know if you need a CST?***

Anyone with a cervix who has ever been sexually active with a man or a woman and is over the aged 25 or older should have routine CSTs.

For routine testing your CST will be due 2 years after your last Pap test for example:

- If you have a Pap smear test before 1/12/17 and it is normal, your next test will be due in 2 years.
- If you have your Test after 1/12/17, it will be the new CST and your next test will be in 5 years if the result is normal

If you have never had a Pap test your first CST will be due at age 25.

***If you have any symptoms of abnormal bleeding, no matter how old you are, it is important to see a FPT Doctor or Nurse regardless of when your last pap/CST was.***

## ***Reminder letters***

There is now a new nationwide register and they will send out reminder letters when your CST is due.

At FPT we will contact you with your result and let you know when you need to have your next CST.

## ***Reducing your risk of cervical cancer***

There are two important things to do to reduce the chance of getting cervical cancer, the first is have the Gardasil injection at school and the other is have a Cervical Screening Test (CST). Additionally, male and female condoms and dams provide some protection from HPV and are important to protect you against other STIs.

The Gardasil vaccination is given to all Australian girls and boys between ages of 12 to 14 years. Gardasil vaccination protects you against the highest risk HPV strains. If you have missed out on the Gardasil school vaccination program,

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see your GP for catch up. If you are not sure if you have had Gardasil injections, you can contact the HPV Register on 1800 478 734 or look at this website for more information: <http://www.hpvregister.org.au/>

Cervical cancer is most likely to occur and go undetected in women who have never had a Pap/CST or who are late for their Pap/CST. So it is important to have regular testing.

## **More about HPV**

HPV is very common: 80% of adults will have had HPV at some stage in their lives. It is a Sexually Transmitted Infection, but for most people it does not cause any symptoms. The majority of people are exposed to the virus when they are young and their body clears the infection on its own, over time. There are more than 120 HPV virus strains and only a few of them are associated with an increased risk of developing cervical cancer. These strains are called oncogenic strains. The body normally clears the virus itself but if an oncogenic strain persists over a long period of time, cells can change and cervical cancer can develop. This can take more than 10 years to occur. Oncogenic HPV strains can also cause cancers of the penis, vulva, vagina, anus and mouth

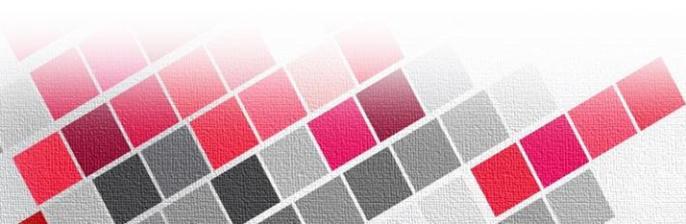
## **Well Woman's Check**

At FPT when we do a CST, we do much more than just your cervical screening. It is a good opportunity to check your periods, any abnormal bleeding or discharge, contraceptive needs, STI testing if appropriate, breast health, PMS symptoms, menopause and continence issues. We also perform an examination to check the vulva and vagina.

At FPT we believe that 5 years is too long between visits to check on these important issues, so we have introduced the 2.5 yearly Well Woman's Check.

## **STI Testing**

Even though you only need to have a CST every 5 years it is important to make sure that if you are *under 30 you have at least an annual STI test.*



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