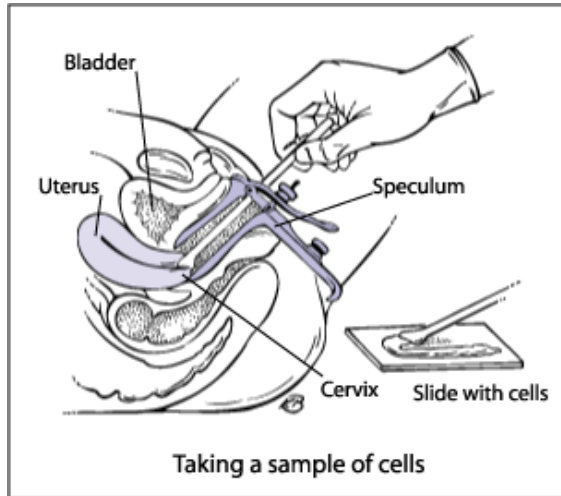


THE PAP SMEAR or PAP TEST

Cervical cancer screening (Pap test) is a test to find abnormal cells in the cervix before they become cancerous. If found, the cells can be removed successfully at a very early stage.



This picture shows how the Pap test sample is obtained. The final report may take up to 6 weeks, and there are 2 parts:

1. Is the Pap normal (or not)? and,
2. When you need the next one? (between 6 and 36 months).

An example of the report is shown below.

CYTOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION

-NEGATIVE FOR INTRAEPITHELIAL LESION OR MALIGNANCY

RECOMMENDATIONS

-PLEASE REPEAT THE SMEAR IN 36 MONTH(S)

The BC Cancer Agency advises that women get their first Pap test at the age of 25, and stop at 69 (according to new guidelines as of July 2016). Cervical cancer and its precursors are almost nonexistent before age 25, and the chance of developing it diminish with age after a peak between 30-50 years of age.

<http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/screening/cervix>.

We can let you know the result, and when you need the next one, by either email or phone. I normally only do the Pap test as part of a gynecological consultation and exam if you are due for one.

STDs AND INFECTIONS TESTED FOR WITH VAGINAL SWABS (AND THE SELFIE)

The vaginal swabs are to check for some Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and other bacteria and yeast that can cause infections in the vagina (vaginitis). If the three swabs are obtained, you'll be checked for:

1. **Chlamydia** (STD)
2. **Gonorrhea** (STD)
3. **Trichomonas** (STD)
4. **Bacterial Vaginosis** (can be associated with sex)
5. **Yeast** (can rarely be sexually transmitted)

The Public Health Agency of Canada **recommends STD's screening (testing) yearly in all sexually active women under the age of 25**. STD's can be present for a long time before women have any symptoms. If they are caught early, the treatment can eradicate the STD's before they cause any harm, hence the regular testing.

The swabs can also be performed in women of any age at any time if they have new sex partner or more than 2 sexual partners in the last year, women with a previous STD, or who have sexual contact with a person with an STD, and all pregnant women at the first prenatal visit.

Please note that there is an '**incubation period**', which is the length of time between infection and when symptoms appear or the test turns positive. It is about up to 1-3 weeks for the above STDs. The swabs do not test for HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, syphilis, HPV or herpes. There are blood tests for some of these STDs.

Advances in the laboratory for identification of STD's from the vaginal walls has allowed the development of **self-swabbing** (as supposed to the physician or nurse doing it). We call the test "**SELFIE**", as we have a protocol that follows if you call and ask for it. Self-swabbing can also be done to find out the cause of vaginal discharge or infections (**vaginitis**), before you take any over the counter treatment, or to confirm that an infection is cleared after treatment.

It takes about 3-6 days to get the results back. We can let you know the results by email (if normal) or phone. We don't provide sensitive information through the email, we use it to convey normal results. If you haven't heard anything in a week, please call the office at 250-763-0640, and send an email to drleon.gyne@gmail.com.

NOTE: URINE TESTING FOR STDs IS NOT AS GOOD IN WOMEN AS IT IS IN MEN.

Dr. Roberto Leon