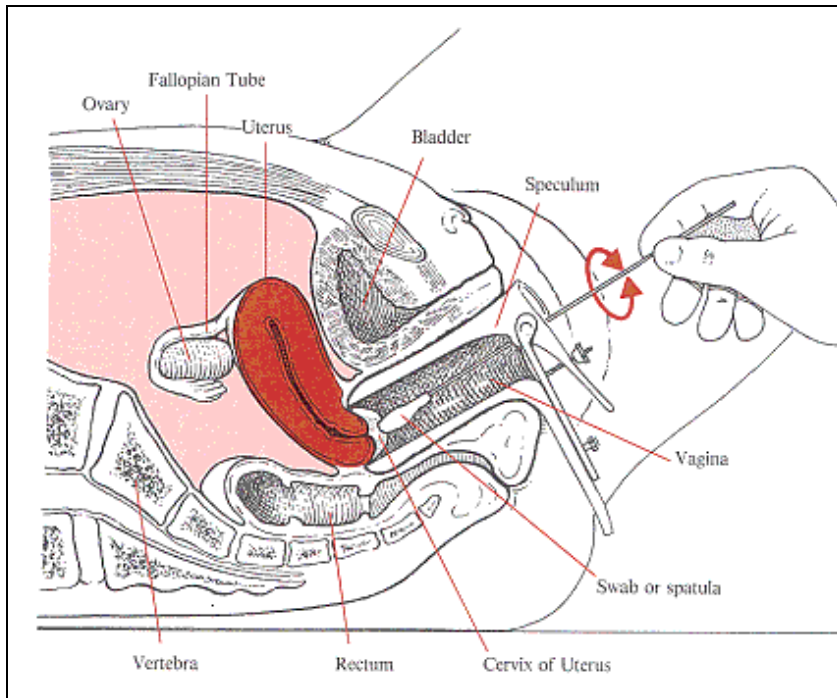


Pap Test



The Pap test is named after Dr. George R. Papanicolaou, who developed the technique for detection of cancer—particularly of the vagina, cervix (the neck or entrance of the uterus), and endometrium (the lining of the inner surface of the uterus).

The test consists of taking fluid from the vagina and cervix. These samples are spread (or “smear”) on glass slides and protected (“fixed”) with a spray. The slide is then studied under a microscope. The Pap test is a simple, painless procedure that can be done in only a few minutes in a physician’s office.

American Cancer Society Recommendations

The American Cancer Society recommends the following schedule for the early detection of cancer in women who have no signs or symptoms that they might have cancer:

- Women 20 and over, and those under 20 who are sexually active, should have a Pap test at least every three years after two initial tests, taken a year apart, have proved negative.
- Women 20 to 40 should have a pelvic examination as part of a general physical examination every three years, and women over 40 should have a pelvic examination every year.
- Every woman should have a pelvic examination and Pap test at menopause. Those at high risk of endometrial cancer should also have an endometrial tissue sample examined. High risk of endometrial cancer is defined as having a history of infertility, obesity, failure of ovulation, or abnormal uterine bleeding, or a woman who is on estrogen therapy.

- Women who are at high risk of developing cervical cancer because of early age at first intercourse, multiple sexual partners, or other factors may need to be tested more frequently.

Members of a National Institutes of Health Consensus Development Panel on Screening for Cervical Cancer are pretty much in agreement with the recommendations of the American Cancer Society. However, your own physician may feel differently based on his or her own experience and may recommend more frequent examinations and Pap testing. For instance, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists still recommends yearly Pap smears for all women.