

New HPV Testing for Cervical Screening — Information for Family Physicians

MARCH 7, 2025

On March 3, 2025, the Ontario Cervical Screening Program (OCSPP) introduced human papillomavirus (HPV) testing as the primary test for cervical screening, replacing cytology (Pap tests or Pap smears).

Compared to the Pap test, the HPV test is better at detecting cancer and pre-cancer and reduces false negatives.

Below is a summary of the new recommendations. Our thanks to the OCSPP for its assistance with this document.

Cervical Screening Recommendations	
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a cervix, are ages 25-69, have ever been sexually active and have OHIP coverage. • Have no symptoms suggestive of cervical cancer (such as abnormal vaginal bleeding or discharge, bleeding after intercourse and pelvic pain). <p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screen patients with the HPV test when they are next due, based on their cytology result and the OCSPP cytology-based guidelines. • The OCSPP strongly discourages screening outside of the newly recommended intervals (see question 30). • Screen even if they have received the HPV vaccine.
New features of HPV testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For every HPV positive result, reflex cytology and partial genotyping (i.e., HPV type) will be performed automatically. Note that only one sample is needed for HPV testing and reflex cytology. • These are both triage tests and risk stratification tools that will be used in combination to determine next screening steps and/or inform who needs to be referred to colposcopy.
Managing HPV-negative results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After a negative HPV test: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Patients return to average risk screening in 5 years. ▪ Patients who are immunocompromised (defined in footnote 8 of the Guide to Cervical Screening) can return to screening in 3 years.
Managing HPV-positive results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Management of HPV-positive test results. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Test results categorized as ‘average’ risk — patients return to routine screening. ▪ Test results categorized as ‘moderate’ risk — patients repeat a cervical screening test in 2 years. ▪ Test results categorized as ‘elevated’ risk — patients are referred to colposcopy.



Cervical Screening Recommendations	
Screening cessation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Cervical Screening Cessation (table on p. 3). • Most people ages 65 to 69 with a negative HPV test. • Screen until age 74 if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ not screened from age 65 to 69. ▪ immunocompromised. ▪ have been discharged from colposcopy, but have not yet met the criteria to return to routine cervical screening by age 69. • Screening is not recommended for people aged 75 and older: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Investigate any visible cervical abnormalities or abnormal symptoms, regardless of age.
HPV testing in colposcopy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use HPV testing in colposcopy to determine eligibility for discharge and the recommended interval for screening postdischarge from colposcopy.

Testing	
Specimen collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See How to Collect a Cervical Sample (OCSP). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collect specimens using the ThinPrep® system. Note that specimens collected using SurePath™ will be rejected. ▪ A self-collected test option is being implemented in a phased approach, beginning with a small number of primary care sites.
Requisitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New form: HPV and Cytology Tests Requisition – For Cervical Screening. MOH lab requisitions and hospital requisitions are no longer accepted. The colposcopy requisition is also available at the Implementation Resource Hub. • The forms may be available through some certified EMRs.
Labs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow your clinic’s regular approach to order supplies and to transport samples. • Collection vials and devices for the HPV test can be ordered from these labs which are performing all OCSP tests in cervical screening and colposcopy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ LifeLabs (1-877-849-3637) ▪ Dynacare (1-800-565-5721) ▪ North Bay Regional Health Centre (1-888-418-6430) • Other community labs are supporting the program with supply delivery and courier services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Alpha Labs (416-449-2166) ▪ Bio-Test (1-800-409-1942) ▪ Med-Health (416-256-7278) ▪ Medical Laboratories of Windsor (519-258-1991).



Sources | Additional Resources

- [HPV Testing in Ontario: Implementation Resource Hub](#) – Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario)
- [Human Papillomavirus \(HPV\) Testing FAQs](#) – Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario)
- [Cervical Screening Recommendations Summary](#) – Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario)
- [OCSP Pathway for Cervical Cancer Screening](#) – Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario)
- [Overview of HPV Testing in the OCSP](#) – recording of OCFP-UofT DFCM CoP session, March 7, 2025
- [FAQ: Cervical Screening Updates](#) – Association of Ontario Midwives