Pap smear abnormalities (colposcopy)

By Dr David Moore, 27 August 2013

Dr Moore is an accreditedcolposcopist, certified by the Australian ColposcopyQuality Improvement Pro Society for Colposcopy and Cervical Pathology.

What is a Pap smear and when should I have one?

The Papanicolaou ("Pap") smear (or Pap test) is a screening test that aims to prevent cases of cervical cancer by detecting early "pre-cancerous" changes of the cervix to allow effective, curative treatment. Australi cervical cancerin the world, due largely to the organised National Cervical Screening Program. Pap smears are u Gynaecologists, or specially trained nurses.

In Australia, **all women who have ever been sexually active** are advised to have a Pap smear **every two years**, unusual symptoms (such as unexpected bleeding, vaginal discharge, or pain). Women who have any of these symptoms if a recent Pap smear was normal.

My Pap smear is abnormal, but what does that mean?

Importantly, **the vast majority of abnormal Pap smearsarenotdue tocancer**, but rather to inflammation, infection, cervical intraepithelial neoplasia (CIN). Many of these require observation only, and your General Practitioner may recom Others, such as high-grade CIN, require referral to a Gynaecologist. A Pap smear is a screening test, meaning that it h thorough evaluation to make a diagnosis and determine treatment. This evaluation is accomplished by colposcopic involves using an illuminating microscope to examine the cervix more closely, allowing a small tissue sample (biops trainedPathologist to make a more certain diagnosis of the cause of the abnormal Pap smear.

What causes cervical cancer?

Almost all abnormal Pap smear results, and cervical cancers,are caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV).

There are over 160 types of HPV, and infection with HPV is **very common**;Professor Ian Frazer, developer of the HPV "the common cold of sexual intercourse" - anyone who has ever had sex can contract HPV, and 80% of people will hav itself requires no specific treatment; in most cases, your immune system clears the virus in8-14 months (importantly, p cigarettesmoking). Rarely, the virus persists and can lead to CIN and cervical cancer, although progression to cancer is a more in most cases). The good news, however, is that ***the great majority of women with HPV will not develop cervica***

Do I need treatment, and what treatments are available?

Depending on the type of Pap smear and biopsy abnormality, you may require close observation only, or surgical treat ablation of the lesion, or excision by either a "loop excision" or cone biopsy. These are minor procedures, usually anaesthesia. Much lessfrequently, a hysterectomy (removal of the womb) may be indicated. Decisions regarding treatm on your age, plans for pregnancy, and your particular medical history. If you require treatment, Dr Moore will carefully ex the recommended course of action in your particular case.

Will I always need more frequent Pap smears now?

Usually not. Depending on the abnormality that was found, the treatment(s) you may have had, and the findings after yo routine (second-yearly) screening after a period of increased surveillance. After a follow-up colposcopy, most women will Practitioner for Pap smear and HPV testing as required.

Where can I get more information?

The National Cervical Screening Program has an excellent FAQ resource page here.

Additionally, your General Practitioner will most likely be able to answer any questions you have, or may give you a referr

About Dr David Moore

David is a Fellow of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, a Queensland. He is highlyskilled in the management of complex and high-risk pregnancies, and has specia endometriosis, pelvic floor and incontinence surgery. David has completed a Master of Reproductive Medi management of fertility problems, and can offer the full range of assisted reproductive treatments. He is a Queensland Medical School, and has published both medical journal and textbook contributions.

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