

University Health Services Mānoa Women's Health

FAQs on General Recommendations for Women's Health Examination and Screenings

1. What is the difference between a pelvic exam and a Pap smear?

Answer:

- A pelvic exam is a way for your health care provider to examine your female organs and check for gynecological problems. You will need to undress for this exam.
- A Pap smear is a screening test to check for changes in the cells of your cervix. The cervix is the lower part of the uterus that opens into your vagina. The Pap test can tell if you have an infection, abnormal cervical cells, or cervical cancer. Your health care provider may perform the Pap smear at the time of a pelvic exam.

2. When do I need my first pelvic exam?

Answer: At age 21 years, but earlier if you experience any of the following signs or symptoms:

- Unexplained pain in your lower abdomen or pelvic area
- Vaginal discharge or wetness on your underwear that causes itching/burning or that smells badly
- Vaginal discharge that lasts for more than 10 days
- Missed periods, especially if you are sexually active
- Pain with intercourse

3. When do I need my first Pap smear?

Answer: At age 21 years.

4. After my first pelvic exam, how often do I need repeat pelvic exams?

Answer: Women who are 21 years and older should have a pelvic exam every year.

5. After having my first Pap smear with normal results, how often do I need repeat Pap smear tests?

Answer:

- Women between 21 and 29 years should have a Pap smear every 3 years
- Women between 30 and 65 years should have a Pap smear every 3 years or a Pap smear plus HPV testing every 5 years

- Women 66 years and older do not need Pap smears if all prior Pap smears have been normal

6. Are there any Special Conditions that may require different scheduling of pelvic exams and/or Pap smears?

Answer: Yes, if you have any of the following, you should discuss recommendations with your health care provider:

- Previous cancer or pre-cancer (CIN 2 or 3) of the cervix
- Hysterectomy
- HIV infection
- Organ transplant recipient
- Exposure to DES in utero

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Age Range (years)	Pelvic exam	Pap smear	Chlamydia & Gonorrhea (STIs) Urine Testing	Breast exam
17-20	No*	No	Annual	As indicated
21-29	Annual	Every 3 years	Annually until 25 years, then as indicated	Annual
30-65	Annual	Every 3 years <u>or</u> every 5 years if performed with HPV testing	If indicated	Annual
≥66	Annual	No (If all prior Pap smears were normal)	If indicated	Annual

*A pelvic exam is required if you have any of the following:

- Unexplained pain in your lower abdomen or pelvic area
- Vaginal discharge or wetness on your underwear that causes itching/burning or that smells badly
- Vaginal discharge that lasts for more than 10 days
- Missed periods, especially if you are sexually active
- Pain with intercourse