FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The ThinPrep® Pap Test

What is a Pap test?

A Pap test checks for abnormal changes to the cells of the cervix. These changes act as an early warning sign that cervical disease may develop in the future.¹ Cells are collected from the cervix and sent to a laboratory where they are reviewed under a microscope.

There are two types of Pap tests in Australia – the original or conventional Pap smear and a newer test women can choose that uses scientifically-proven technology known as liquid-based cytology. The cells are collected in the same way by the doctor or nurse; however, they are processed differently and have different effectiveness rates.²

What is the ThinPrep Pap test?

The ThinPrep Pap test is the most widely used liquid based cytology (LBC) test in Australia. LBC is the first real improvement to the original Pap smear in 50 years and is significantly more effective at detecting cervical disease (abnormal cells) than the original Pap smear.³,⁴

The ThinPrep Pap test has been extensively studied around the world including Australia. It is the standard of care for cervical screening in the USA, the UK and New Zealand.⁴

How effective is the ThinPrep Pap test?

Clinical research shows a woman can place greater trust in the diagnosis of her ThinPrep Pap Test as it is more likely to detect high-grade (severe) abnormalities that may be missed with the original Pap smear (‘false negative’).⁵,⁶

In Australia, ThinPrep is clinically proven to be 27% more effective at detecting high-grade precancerous cervical disease and 56% more effective at finding low-grade abnormalities compared to the original Pap smear.⁶ In addition there is a 94% decrease in unsatisfactory reports with the ThinPrep Pap test.⁷

How does the ThinPrep Pap test work in Australia?

At the doctor’s office: A woman’s cervical cells are collected by a doctor or nurse in the same way as the original Pap smear. However, after smearing the cells directly on a glass slide, the remainder of the sample is rinsed into a container filled with a preservative solution.

At the laboratory: The ThinPrep process transfers a woman’s cells to a glass slide in a thin, even layer which improves the quality of the slide.³,⁴ Studies around the world show the ThinPrep system produces a clearer slide that is truly representative of a woman’s state of cervical health, making it a more accurate test than the original Pap smear. Laboratory professionals are able to interpret the results with greater confidence.³,⁴,⁸
How is the ThinPrep system different?

The ThinPrep system combines newer, scientifically-proven technology to prepare the sample of cervical cells collected and a cutting-edge computerised analysis system to pinpoint potentially abnormal cells, which is then reviewed by a laboratory professional.

Virtually all of the cells are collected and a clearer slide is created for a more accurate diagnosis as opposed to the original Pap smear which may discard as many as 80% of the cells collected.\(^3\,4\,8\)

Additional investigations can also be performed from the same ThinPrep Pap test sample, such as Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) testing and also for the very common sexually transmitted infections, chlamydia and gonorrhoea.\(^1\) Chlamydia and gonorrhoea testing attracts a Medicare rebate. HPV testing is Medicare rebatable when it is performed following treatment of biopsy-confirmed high-grade cervical disease. In such circumstances the Medicare rebate is limited to two HPV tests within a 24 month period.\(^9\)

What does it cost?

Unlike the United Kingdom and New Zealand, the ThinPrep Pap Test is currently not Government-funded in Australia. The cost to a woman in Australia is around $50 for the peace of mind of having the most effective Pap test available, according to the United States Food & Drug Administration (FDA).\(^3\)

How often should Australian women need to have Pap tests?

The National Cervical Screening Program recommends all women who have ever been sexually active have a Pap test every 2 years from the age of 18 until 70, even if you have had the HPV vaccine.\(^10\)

The Department of Health and Ageing has announced a review of the National Cervical Screening Program, which involves an assessment of newer technologies, including the ThinPrep Pap test.

To stay up-to-date on the renewal of the cervical screening program, visit the National Cervical Screening Program’s Renewal website page.

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2. United States Food & Drug Administration (FDA)
3. ThinPrep® 2000 System Package Insert Part No. MAN-02060-002 REV.001
4. Data on file with Hologic, Inc.
10. Australian Government’s National Cervical Screening Program Policy for screening women vaccinated against HPV. Available here.

*The ThinPrep® Pap test is significantly more effective than the conventional Pap smear for the detection of Low Grade Squamous Intraepithelial (LSIL) and more severe lesions in a variety of patient populations.