


# Cervical Cancer Screening Guide for Patients



## How to Use This Guide

This guide will help you prepare for a cervical cancer screening and ask for accommodations.

To best identify the accommodations you need, please use this guide together with **Health Care Accommodations: My Checklist**.

**The Cervical Cancer Screening Guide** focuses only on accommodations needed for a cervical cancer screening. **Health Care Accommodations: My Checklist** has other accommodations considerations, like interpreters, accessible tables, or communication support.



**Note:** This guide uses the word *doctor*, but you may see a different type of health care professional, like a nurse practitioner or physician assistant. The information in this guide also applies to them.



**Health Care  
Accommodations:  
My Checklist**  
Visit [bit.ly/3HatJoy](https://bit.ly/3HatJoy)  
Scan QR code at left

## Getting Started

### Best time to start:

One to two weeks before your appointment.

### You can complete this guide:

On your own or with a trusted support person.

### How to fill it out:

- Print it out and write in your answers
- Fill it out electronically and save or print it out



## Instructions

1. Complete **Health Care Accommodations: My Checklist**.
2. **Read** about different ways to get screened for cervical cancer.
3. **Select** any accommodations you need.
4. **Write questions** you have for your doctor, insurance company, and local resources for this screening.
5. **Finalize** your cervical cancer screening plan.

## Tips for Success

- **Take breaks.** Complete this guide one section at a time.
- **Focus on what matters most.** You do not have to answer every question.
- **Ask for help** if you need it.
- **Bring your completed Health Care Accommodations Checklist and this guide** to your appointment and share with your health care team.

## What to Expect



### What is Cervical Cancer?

A type of cancer that occurs in the cells of the cervix, the lower part of the uterus that connects to the vagina. This screening looks for signs of cervical cancer or precancerous changes to help detect problems early when treatment is most effective. Most cervical cancers are caused by certain types of human papillomavirus (HPV).

### Who Needs This Screening?

Women and people with a cervix or assigned female at birth (people who were born with female body parts) beginning at age 21. You should continue to get screened until age 65 or as long as your doctor says it is right for you. Some people may have different screening recommendations than in this guide. Follow the schedule you and your doctor discuss.

## Your Screening Options

### Option 1: Pap Test (Pap Smear)

#### Who is this for?

Women and people assigned female at birth (people who were born with female body parts) ages 21–65.



*Speculum*

#### What happens during the screening?

1. Undress from the waist down. You can use a sheet to cover yourself.
2. Lie on the exam table with your knees bent and spread apart.
3. Your doctor uses a speculum, an instrument that is inserted into the vagina, and gently opens the vagina for the doctor to see the cervix.
4. They use a small brush or spatula to collect cells from the cervix.
5. These cells are sent to a lab to test for abnormal changes that could be cancer or precancer.

#### How often would I need this type of screening?

If the results of your Pap test are normal, then you need this screening **every three years**.

### Option 2: HPV Test

#### Who is this for?

- Women and people assigned female at birth (people who were born with female body parts) ages 30–65.
- People who prefer to have the screening done every five years instead of every three years.

#### What happens during the screening?

- The HPV test looks for high-risk HPV, which can cause cervical cancer.
- The test is done the same way as a Pap test.
- Your doctor collects cells from the cervix using a speculum and small brush.



*Speculum*

#### How often would I need this type of screening?

If your HPV screening results are normal, then you need this screening **every five years**.

## Option 3: HPV Self-Collection

### Who is this for?

- Women and people assigned female at birth (people who were born with female body parts) ages 30-65.
- Those who may not be able to tolerate or prefer not to have a speculum exam.

### What happens during the test?

- This test uses a swab only and does not use a speculum.
- Either you or your doctor collects a sample using a special swab that is inserted into your vagina.
- Your doctor will give you instructions on how to do this properly.



Swab

### How often would I need this type of screening?

If your HPV screening results are normal, then you need this screening **every five years**.

## Accommodations You Can Ask For

Doctors must help and support your needs within reason. This is called **reasonable accommodations**. A doctor may not be able to provide every accommodation you ask for.

If they cannot accommodate you, then they should talk with you about other options for getting the care you need.



On the next page is a list of accommodations you may need for your cervical cancer screening.

## Accommodations for Cervical Cancer Screening



**Instructions:** Check the box next to each accommodation you may need.  
Bring this checklist to your appointment.

### Getting Into Position for the Screening:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Height-adjustable exam table
<input type="checkbox"/>	Stool or steps to make getting onto the exam table easier
<input type="checkbox"/>	Knee crutch stirrups for exam table
<input type="checkbox"/>	Alternative position options
<input type="checkbox"/>	Extra time for me to get into position
<input type="checkbox"/>	Larger sheet or blanket for more coverage

### During the Screening:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Height-adjustable exam table
<input type="checkbox"/>	Smaller speculum
<input type="checkbox"/>	When inserting the speculum, please follow my instructions to go slow, stop, or start again
<input type="checkbox"/>	Warm speculum
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check-ins on my comfort level
<input type="checkbox"/>	HPV self-collection, if available and eligible
<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff assistance with self-collection
<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff explains each step as the screening is happening, so I know what to expect

### Other Accommodations I Need:

<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	

## Questions to Ask



### Questions for My Doctor's Office:

Ask the receptionist these questions when you call to schedule your appointment or call any time before your visit.

***“I have a list of accommodations that would support me during my cervical cancer screening. Can you review this list and tell me which ones your office can provide?”***

***Other questions for my doctor's office:***

## Questions to Ask



### Questions for My Doctor:

***“Speculum exams are uncomfortable for me. What accommodations would you recommend?”***

☐

HPV self-collected test

☐

Warm speculum

☐

Smaller speculum

☐

Other

***“Is HPV self-collection available at your office as an alternative to the speculum exam?”***

***“Based on my age, which screening options am I eligible for?”***

☐ Pap smear   ☐ HPV test   ☐ HPV self-collected test

***“What are the benefits and risks (or concerns) of Pap tests compared to HPV tests for someone my age?”***



***“If I choose the HPV self-collected test, will someone be available to help me if I have questions about the process or am unable to collect the swab myself?”***

***“How often do I need to get a cervical cancer screening?”***

***Other questions for my doctor:***



## Questions to Ask Insurance:

Call the number on your insurance card or visit your insurance online portal (if available).

***“What cervical cancer screening options does my insurance cover?”***

☐ Pap smear

☐ HPV self-collected test

☐ HPV test

☐ Other:

***Other questions for insurance:***



## Questions to Ask About Local Resources

To find accessible screening locations, contact your local health department, disability organizations (call 211), search [www.findhelp.org](http://www.findhelp.org), or ask your doctor's office.

***“Are there mobile cervical cancer screening clinics that might be more accessible to me?”***

***Other questions about local resources:***

## My Plan for Cervical Cancer Screening

### Type of screening I will get:

- ☐ Pap smear
- ☐ HPV test
- ☐ HPV self-collected test

### My Appointment



Date of my appointment:

Time of my appointment:



Location of my appointment:

Address:

Directions to the office:

Accessible parking or drop-off location:

Accessible entrance and elevator location:

# Screening for All



**Making preventive health screenings  
accessible for everyone.**

More resources available at  
[mcd.org/screening-for-all](https://mcd.org/screening-for-all)



**Screening For All** is an initiative funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (NCBDDD) to address the significant barriers people with disabilities face in accessing preventive health screenings.

Developed by MCD Global Health, this project provides patients and health care practitioners with evidence-based tools and resources to make preventive health screenings accessible to all patients. Questions or comments can be sent to [info@mcd.org](mailto:info@mcd.org).

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