Practice Assist
Strengthening general practice in WA
Fact Sheet
No. 1 \ December 2017

National
Cervical Screening Program

Changes to Cervical Screening

Changes to the national Cervical Screening program are effective from 1 December 2017.

Why make changes?

Research has shown that nearly all cervical cancers are caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV). Cervical cancer is a rare outcome of persistent HPV infection with oncogenic HPV types, with time from initial HPV infection to cervical cancer being 10 to 15 years.

Evidence also suggests that screening for HPV every five years is more effective than, and just as safe as, screening with a Pap test every two years.

Healthcare providers are now encouraged to focus on detecting early stage HPV, and in particular, Types 16 and 18 which have been associated with 70 to 80 per cent of cases in Australia.

Who can have a Cervical Screening Test under the changes?

Instead of the previous two yearly Pap smear screening program, the new Cervical Cancer Screening program recommends use of the new Cervical Screening Test every five years for people aged 25 to 74 years.

People with symptoms (including pain or bleeding) can have a cervical test at any age and a patient aged 75 years of age or older who has never had a cervical screening test, or has not had one in the previous five years, may also be screened.

Patient reminder and recall systems

Healthcare providers will need to update their patient recall and reminder systems in line with the new Cervical Cancer Screening program recommendations.

What is the new test?

Like the previous cervical screening program, healthcare providers will still perform an examination using a vaginal speculum to take a sample. However, the sample medium is now liquid-based and will be tested for the presence of HPV.

For the client, the way the test is performed will look and feel the same as a Pap smear.

Self-collection option (not currently available)

One of the components of the renewed National Cervical Screening Program is the introduction of self-collected samples for HPV testing. The self-collection option has been included in the program to encourage women who are aged 30 years or over and have never had a screening test, or who are overdue for testing by at least two years and in either case have declined healthcare provider-collected sample, to participate in cervical screening.

However, self-collection can only be implemented when the laboratory and platform testing processes and equipment attain the various accreditation requirements. This process is still underway. Laboratories are not yet accredited to perform the test and therefore the test is not claimable against the MBS.

Australian Government
Department of Health
WAPHA
WA Primary Health Alliance
RURAL HEALTH WEST

Healthcare providers who conduct cervical screening tests are advised not to offer self-collection to eligible women until further notice.

All other aspects of the renewed National Cervical Screening Program will go ahead as scheduled on 1 December 2017.

New pathology request form requirements for GPs

Pathology request forms submitted with samples for screening will need to be completed differently under the new cervical screening program. Getting this information correct is critical for pathology laboratories to conduct the right tests, match to the correct clinical recommendations and select the appropriate MBS item.

The patient's presentation and testing history will need to be provided on the pathology request form. If this information is not provided, patients may be charged incorrectly for the test, or to have to return for a repeat examination.

Note: If healthcare providers write 'Pap test' or 'smear' on the pathology request form, their patient will be privately charged.

Medicare Benefit Schedule item numbers for pathology services

From 1 December 2017, seven new Medicare funded cervical screening pathology services will be available. Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) item numbers 73070, 73071, 73072, 73073, 73074, 73075 and 73076 will form part of the implementation of the National Cervical Screening Program.

Pathology providers should note that the previous Medicare cervical screening items have been removed from the MBS Pathology Services Table.

More information

The Australian Government Department of Health provides further information on the National Cervical Screening Program at:

http://www.health.gov.au/internet/screening/publishing.nsf/Content/cervical-screening-1

For a Pathology Test Guide Poster for Cervical and Vaginal Testing, which includes the types of

information that healthcare providers will need to include when ordering pathologist reports visit:

http://www.cancerscreening.gov.au/internet/screening/publishing.nsf/Content/0631DDF840C79937CA2581C4001DC99B/$File/CAN181%20-%20Pathology%20Test%20Guide%20for%20Cervical%20and%20Vaginal%20Testing%20V2.pdf

HealthPathways WA

HealthPathways has now launched the Cervical Screening pathway which summarises the new guidelines and links to flowcharts for patients with additional screening requirements and colposcopy providers.

The pathway has been reviewed and approved by the WA Cervical Cancer Prevention Program.

Email healthpathways@wapha.org.au if you require access to this free online health information portal.

NEW FROM 1 DECEMBER 2017: National Cervical Screening Program Medicare Benefits Schedule item numbers and descriptions for pathology services

Please note: Consultation fees are also applicable.

Item number	Description	Schedule Fee	85% Rebate
73070	A test, including partial genotyping, for oncogenic human papillomavirus (HPV) that may be associated with cervical pre-cancer or cancer: a) performed on a liquid based cervical specimen; and b) for an asymptomatic patient who is at least 24 years and 9 months of age. For any particular patient, once only in a 57-month period	$35.00	$29.75
73071 (not currently available)	A test, including partial genotyping, for oncogenic HPV that may be associated with cervical pre-cancer or cancer: a) performed on a self-collected vaginal specimen; and b) for an asymptomatic patient who is at least 30 years of age. For any particular patient, once only in a 7-year period	Not currently available	Not currently available
73072	A test, including partial genotyping, for oncogenic HPV, performed on a liquid based cervical specimen: a) for the investigation of a patient in a specific population that appears to have a higher risk of cervical pre-cancer or cancer; or b) for the follow up management of a patient with a previously detected oncogenic human papillomavirus infection or cervical pre-cancer or cancer, or c) for the investigation of a patient with symptoms suggestive of cervical cancer; or d) for the follow up management of a patient after treatment of high grade squamous intraepithelial lesions or adenocarcinoma in situ of the cervix; or e) for the follow up management of a patient with glandular abnormalities; or f) for the follow up management of a patient exposed to diethylstilboestrol in utero.	$35.00	$29.75
73073	A test, including partial genotyping, for oncogenic HPV: a) performed on a self-collected vaginal specimen; and b) for the follow up management of a patient with oncogenic human papillomavirus or cervical pre-cancer or cancer that was detected by a test to which item 73071 applies. For any particular patient, once only in a 21-month period.	$35.00	$29.75
73074	A test, including partial genotyping, for oncogenic HPV: a) performed on a liquid based vaginal vault specimen; and b) for the investigation of a patient following a total hysterectomy.	$35.00	$29.75
73075	A test, including partial genotyping, for oncogenic HPV, if: a) the test is a repeat of a test to which item 73070, 73071, 73072, 73073, 73074 or this item applies; and b) the specimen collected for the previous test is unsatisfactory.	$35.00	$29.75

Item number	Description	Schedule Fee	85% Rebate
73076	Cytology of a liquid-based cervical or vaginal vault specimen, where the stained cells are examined microscopically or by automated image analysis by or on behalf of a pathologist, if: a) the cytology is associated with the detection of oncogenic HPV infection by: i. a test to which item 73070, 73071, 73073, 73074 or 73075 applies; or ii. a test to which item 73072 applies for a patient mentioned in paragraph a) or b) of that item; or b) the cytology is associated with a test to which item 73072 applies for a patient mentioned in paragraph c), d), e) or f) of that item; or c) the cytology is associated with a test to which item 73074 applies; or d) the test is a repeat of a test to which this item applies, if the specimen collected for the previous test is unsatisfactory; or e) the cytology is for the follow-up management of a patient treated for endometrial adenocarcinoma.	$46.00	$39.10