



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND UNIVERSITY HEALTH CENTER

Accredited by the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care, Inc.
www.health.umd.edu

New Guidelines for Pap & STI Testing

There are some changes in testing recommendations for the annual women's wellness visit.

What has not changed for young women.

All young women who have ever been sexually active need annual testing for sexually transmitted infections (STI's) and by age 21, women who have not been sexually active are recommended to have their first pelvic examination. Young women are at the highest risk for contracting STI's, like Chlamydia, which can cause illness and infertility. These infections can be present without symptoms, so screening tests for them are necessary.

All women need periodic blood pressure screening, cholesterol screening, and evaluation of diet, exercise and preventative health practices.

What has changed?

A woman's first **Pap test is now recommended at age 21 or within 3 years after she becomes sexually active, which ever occurs first.** The Pap smear is a screening test for cervical cancer, a cancer caused by long standing persistent infection with the Human Papilloma virus. This virus is sexually transmitted and is usually transient, with most infections being cleared by the woman's own immune system in 6-24 months. Cervical cancer occurs only in the rare case an infection becomes persistent and does not resolve. The peak occurrence of HPV infection is in women in their early 20's and the peak occurrence of cervical cancer is 15 years later, in the 4th or 5th decades of life. Delaying cervical cancer screening 2-3 years after initiating first sexual intercourse, allows transient infections and minor associated cell changes to resolve, sparing the woman stressful testing and treatment.

**A well woman visit is an important part of staying healthy and knowing yourself.
It is especially important for all sexually active young women.**

**If you have questions or would like to schedule an appointment
call the Women's clinic at 301-314-8190.**

1.07

Published for the University of Maryland community.

This paper is made from 30% post consumer waste. Don't let the cycle stop here, please recycle this after you recover.