

PATIENT RESOURCES

Cervical Cancer Screening in Transgender Non-binary, Non-conforming, and Gender Fluid Individuals

Care for transgender people who have a cervix should include routine health exams and screening for cancers as indicated regardless of gender identity. Screening for cervical cancer can be both physically and emotionally distressing. However the early detection of abnormal pap tests can lead to earlier diagnoses and possible cancer prevention. For example, transgender men have similar risks of cervical cancer as cis-gender women. (women whose gender identity matches their sex at birth) Screening should begin at age 21. Recommendations for screening are similar to cis-gender women and may include Pap smears and/or HPV tests. Sometimes people who take testosterone can have inconclusive Pap tests as a result of hormone therapy. The longer a patient has been on testosterone hormone therapy, the higher the chance of an unsatisfactory result. Further testing (see “colposcopy”) is sometimes needed.

The following tips can help prepare for an exam.

1. Asking for an explanation of the steps of the exam can reduce the stress of not knowing what to expect.
2. If you have had an exam in the past that made you uncomfortable, talking to your provider about this can help them plan with you how to make this exam as easy as possible.
3. Your provider will likely use a small speculum with lubricant. Before inserting the speculum, they may do an exam with their finger to locate the cervix so the speculum placement is easier.
4. A small tool such as a soft brush or a plastic spatula will be used to obtain the sample from the cervix.
5. After the exam, talk with your provider about how you will receive your results (phone, letter, electronic communication). If you find the exam difficult, make sure you have a plan for taking care of yourself afterwards. This may be resting at home, talking with someone in your support system, etc.

References:

<http://transhealth.ucsf.edu/pdf/Transgender-PGACG-6-17-16.pdf>

<http://tinyurl.com/hap4vpb>