



Women's Health



Fun Stuff

When is your next Pap smear due?

Are you one of the 40% of women who are **not** having a Pap smear every 2 years? Regular Pap smears can detect early changes in the cells of the cervix (neck of the womb) which may lead to cancer if untreated.

All women over 18 who have ever had sex (including with other women) need a Pap smear every 2 years until the age of 70, as the risk of cervical cancer increases with age. The first test is done between 18 and 20, or 1-2 years after you first have intercourse, whichever is later. Some women who have had a hysterectomy still require regular Pap smears. Ask your GP.

What about the HPV vaccine?

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the main cause of abnormal Pap smears and cervical cancer and is passed on through sex. The HPV vaccine gives good immunity against HPV from future partners and can be given up to the age of 45. As the vaccine does not prevent all cervical

cancers, it is still important to have regular tests.

What if I have an abnormal result?

Over 90% of Pap smears are normal. Most changes are low grade and simply require a repeat test in 12 months. Usually the changes clear up without treatment.

If more advanced (high grade) changes are found, you may be referred for a colposcopy, an examination of the cervix under magnification. Abnormal areas can be removed before they develop into cancer by freezing, laser, burning or surgery under local or general anaesthetic.

Cancer is rare in women who have regular tests.

When was your last Pap smear?

Your doctor can advise you when your next Pap smear is due. The Pap smear register also keeps a confidential record of your results and can be contacted on 13 15 56.

www.cancerscreening.gov.au

What's in a name?

A pregnant woman is involved in a car accident and falls into a deep coma for six months. When she wakes up she sees that she is no longer pregnant and frantically asks the doctor about her baby.

The doctor replies, "Ma'am you had twins! A boy and a girl. Your brother came in and named them."

The woman thinks to herself, "No, not my brother... he's an idiot!"

She asks the doctor, "Well, what's the girl's name?"

"Denise."

"Wow, that's not a bad name, I like it! What's the boy's name?"

"Denephew."



Diabetes. Regular eye checks are vital.

All people with diabetes should have regular eye checks. Diabetes can cause loss of vision and blindness which is preventable if detected early. When was your last check?

Diabetes damages the very fine blood vessels in the retina (diabetic retinopathy). The retina is a thin layer lining the inner surface of the eye.

Diabetic retinopathy affects vision in two ways:

- **Macular oedema:** leakage of fluid and swelling at the centre of vision (macula)
- **Proliferative retinopathy:** growth of new and fragile blood vessels which can bleed easily and cause cloudy vision and scarring

Diabetes also increases the risk of cataracts (clouding of the lens), reducing vision further.

Who is at risk of retinopathy?

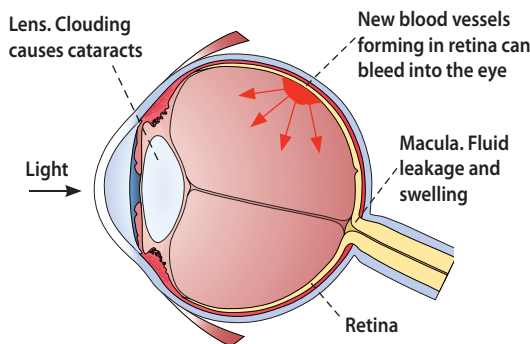
Everyone with diabetes. The longer you have diabetes, the greater the risk. After 15 years, about 3 out of 4 diabetics have some retinopathy.

The risk is increased further by:

- **Poor control of diabetes** (aim for HbA1c < 7)
- **Raised blood pressure** (aim for 'systolic' BP < 130)
- **Elevated cholesterol and triglycerides**

Have your eyes checked regularly

All people with diabetes should have their eyes examined at least every 2 years.



Don't wait until you detect a problem as retinopathy can be quite advanced before you notice any deterioration. Also see your doctor without delay if your vision deteriorates.

Treatment with laser therapy

Advanced retinopathy is treated with laser therapy, which involves using a concentrated beam of light to make small burns in the retina. Laser therapy cannot restore lost vision, but can prevent further damage.

Laser treatment is usually well tolerated but can cause some discomfort or even pain, temporary blurring of vision and increased glare.

Speak to your GP about getting an eye check.

www.nhmrc.gov.au. Search: diabetic retinopathy

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