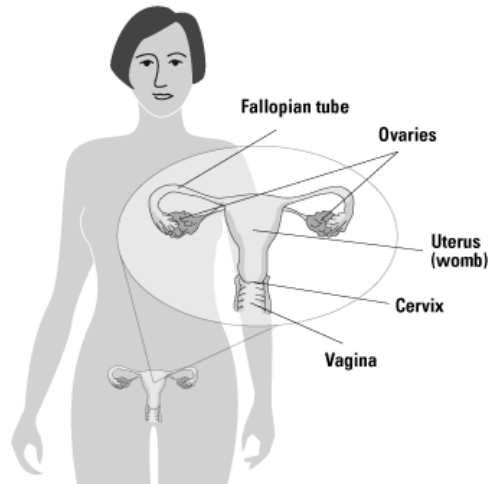


# Hysterectomy and Pap Tests



If you have had a TOTAL hysterectomy (removal of the cervix and uterus or womb) for reasons other than cancer, you do not need to have Pap tests. This is the recommendation Kaiser Permanente in Northern California, as well as the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the National Cancer Institute, and the American Cancer Society.



## What is the Pap test?

The Pap test checks the health of your **cervix**. Sometimes it can find changes that could lead to cervical cancer. It is *not* a test for ovarian cancer or sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

## What is the cervix?

The cervix is the opening to the uterus. It is at the top of the vagina. When your doctor or nurse practitioner does a Pap test, s/he removes a few cells from the cervix with a soft brush, puts them on a slide, and sends the slide to the lab to look for changes or abnormalities.

## Can I get cervical cancer if I have had my cervix removed?

No. There are other very rare cancers of the vagina and outside genital area, but Pap tests are not a good way to find them.

## What is removed when a woman has a hysterectomy?

- The uterus is always removed. Most of the time, the cervix is removed also. This is called a **total** hysterectomy. Women who have had a total hysterectomy for reasons other than cancer don't need Pap tests.
- Sometimes the cervix is left in place. This is called a **supracervical** or partial hysterectomy. If you have had a partial hysterectomy, you still need to have regular Pap tests.
- At the time of surgery the ovaries are sometimes removed, or sometimes left in place. But this doesn't change the type of hysterectomy.

## What if I don't know what type of hysterectomy I had?

If you aren't sure about the type of hysterectomy you had, a pelvic exam will be able to tell. If the surgery to remove your uterus was done thru the vagina, the cervix was definitely removed.

## What if I don't remember why I had a hysterectomy?

In this case, reviewing your old records to find out why you had your surgery might be helpful. If you had your surgery more than 10 years ago, you probably had a total hysterectomy. If that's the case, you don't need ongoing Pap tests.

## But what if I was told in the past that I needed to continue to have Pap tests, even though I've had a hysterectomy?

Our knowledge about the cause of cervical cancer and the usefulness of Pap tests has changed dramatically in the last few years. Recommendations change as we learn more.

Your doctor or nurse practitioner is your partner in keeping you healthy. If you want to more information about hysterectomy, or Pap tests, or cervical cancer, you can find lots of information on your doctor's homepage ([www.permanente.net](http://www.permanente.net)) or in the [Health Encyclopedia](#) on your doctor's homepage or on [Kaiser Permanente.members.org](http://KaiserPermanente.members.org)