

Atlanta Gyn & OB
Institutes New Pap Smear Guidelines

ACOG Announces New Pap Smear and Cervical Cancer Screening Guidelines

The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists announced that women should have their first pap smear screening at age 21 and can be re-screened less frequently than previously recommended.

Most low risk women younger than 30 years old should undergo pap smear cervical screening once every two years instead of annually, and those age 30 and older can be re-screened once every three years.

Cervical cancer is a slow growing cancer caused by certain strains of the human papillomavirus (HPV), an extremely common sexually transmitted disease among women and men. HPV also causes genital and anal warts.

Cervical cancer rates have fallen more than 50% in the past 30 years in the US due to the widespread use of the Pap test. The majority of deaths from cervical cancer in the US are among women who are screened infrequently or not at all.

ACOG revised recommendations are:

- ★ Women from ages 21 to 30 be screened every two years instead of annually.
- ★ Women age 30 and older who have had three consecutive negative cervical cytology test results may be screened once every three years.
- ★ Women with certain risk factors may need more frequent screening, including those who have HIV, are immunosuppressed, were exposed to diethylstilbestrol (DES) in utero, and have been treated for moderate or severe dysplasia or cervical cancer.
- ★ Routine pap smear testing should be discontinued in women (regardless of age) who have had a total hysterectomy (removal of the cervix along with the uterus) for noncancerous reasons, as long as they have no history of moderate or severe cervical disease or cervical cancer.

ACOG's recommendations on the upper age limit for discontinuing cervical screening remain the same. It is reasonable to stop cervical cancer screening at age 65 or 70 among women who have three or more negative cytology results in a row and no abnormal test results in the past 10 years. ACOG also recommends that women who have been vaccinated against HPV should follow the same screening guidelines as unvaccinated women.

Be sure to consult you doctor regarding the frequency and the type of pap smear that is adequate for you.