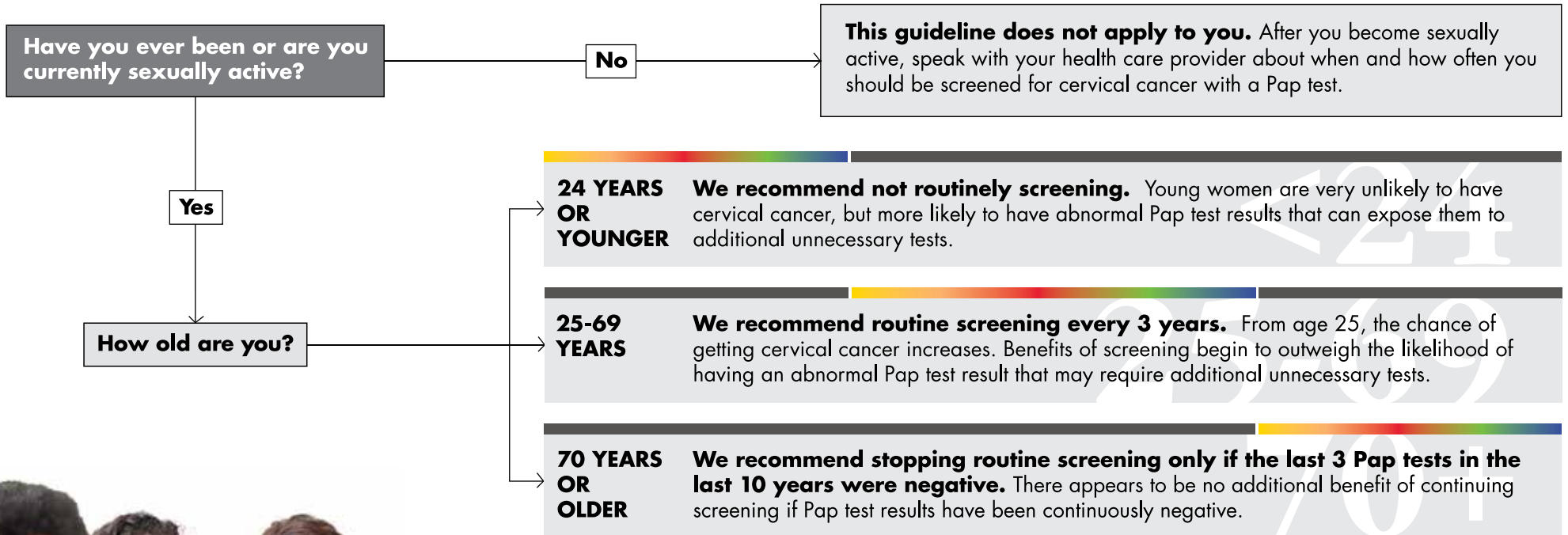


# Should you be screened for Cervical Cancer?

Cervical cancer is a type of cancer that starts in the cervix, which is the lower part of the uterus. Screening for cervical cancer is done with a Pap test to identify abnormal changes in the cells of your cervix caused by viruses such as the Human Papillomavirus (HPV). In a few women, these abnormal cells develop into cancer. Cervical cancer screening can lead to early treatment, which can prevent the abnormal cells from developing into cancer, or can cure early cancer with simple treatment.

**The Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care (CTFPHC) updated its recommendations on cervical cancer screening to ensure that women receive the greatest benefit from screening while reducing inconvenience, discomfort and unnecessary testing.** The figure below can help you make an informed decision about when to screen for cervical cancer with a Pap test. For women who have received HPV vaccinations, we recommend the same screening schedule but talk to your health care provider further about HPV vaccination and cervical cancer risk. **Please note that these recommendations do NOT apply to women who have never been sexually active, have had a full hysterectomy for a benign (i.e. non-cancerous) disease, who have had a previous abnormal Pap test, and/or have a weakened immune system.**



Additional information on cervical cancer screening with a Pap test and the recommendations is provided on the other side of this page.



# Knowing the Facts about Cervical Cancer Screening

The Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care (CTFPHC) recommends that women between the ages of 25 and 69 be screened for cervical cancer with a Pap test every 3 years.



## I am a woman between the ages of 25 and 69. Why should I be screened every 3 years?

Among women **who do not screen**, the lifetime risk of dying from cervical cancer is about **1 in 100**

Among women **who screen every 3 years**, the lifetime risk of dying from cervical cancer is about **1 in 500**

Among women **who screen annually**, the lifetime risk of dying from cervical cancer is about **1 in 588**

**A**fter the age of 25, the likelihood of being diagnosed with cervical cancer increases dramatically. 86% of women who get cervical cancer are between the ages of 25 and 69. Screening with a Pap test improves a woman's chances of survival from cervical cancer. However, screening more often than every 3 years may not add any additional benefits and may expose women to more frequent "false positive" or abnormal Pap test results. About 3% of women over the age of 30 will have an abnormal Pap test result, which may lead to additional unnecessary tests (see "What else should I know about cervical cancer screening?" below).

## I am a woman 24 years of age or younger. Should I be screened for cervical cancer?

About **1%** of women who get cervical cancer are 24 years of age or younger

Women 20 to 24 years of age have a **less than 1 in 500 000** chance of dying from cervical cancer

**B**ecause there is such a small risk of being diagnosed with and dying from cervical cancer, young women are very unlikely to benefit from cervical cancer screening. Additionally, about 10% of young women have an abnormal Pap test result. This makes young women 24 years of age or younger more likely than older women to be exposed to additional testing that may be unnecessary (see "What else should I know about cervical cancer screening?" below).

### What else should I know about cervical cancer screening?

Sometimes a Pap test shows abnormal cells in the cervix. An abnormal test result does not mean you have cervical cancer, but will need follow-up with either a repeat Pap test or additional follow-up tests such as colposcopy (examination of cervix with a magnifying instrument) and/or biopsies (removing a sample of cells with an instrument in minor surgery) to check under the microscope. Waiting for the outcome of an abnormal test result may cause anxiety and/or stress.

Be informed! Talk to your health care provider about when and how often you should be screened for cervical cancer.

