

November 2013 Changes to Nova Scotia Cervical Cancer Screening Guidelines

In 2013 the Nova Scotia Cervical Cancer Screening Practice Guidelines were updated. The recommendations in place since 2006 were modified in three main areas: the frequency of routine Papanicolaou (Pap) testing for precursor lesions in the endocervical canal, and the age and circumstances governing when screening should begin and end.

The interval between Pap tests is now *three years*. The new rule of thumb for beginning routine screening is within three years of a woman becoming sexually active or upon reaching the age of 21, whichever comes later. Women who have never been sexually active do not need Pap screening and testing can now cease for women at age 70 if they have had *three or more negative Pap tests in the previous 10 years*. The changes reflect recent progress in understanding the natural history of cervical cancer, and a greater appreciation of the balance of benefits and risks associated with cervical cancer screening. The guidelines apply only to women with *no* symptoms of cervical cancer who are, or have been, sexually active. These new recommendations deal only with Pap testing; not other preventive health screens if indicated. Excluded from the new screening guidelines are women with symptoms of cervical cancer.

For more information on cervical cancer screening visit www.cancercare.ns.ca/cervicalcancerprevention
To obtain a copy of your patient's cervical cancer screening history call 473-7438 or 1-888-480-8588.

	NS 2006 guidelines	NS 2013 guidelines
Initiation	Within 3 years of first vaginal sexual activity or age 21, whichever occurs earlier	Within 3 years of first vaginal sexual activity or age 21, whichever comes later. Women who have never been sexually active do not need Pap screening.
Interval	3 annual negative Paps, then screening every two years	<i>Screened every 3 years</i>
Cessation	Discontinue screening at age 75 ONLY if there is an adequate negative screening history in the previous 10 years (i.e. 3 or more negative tests)	Discontinue screening at <i>age 70</i> ONLY if there is an adequate negative screening history in the previous 10 years (i.e. 3 or more negative tests)

The cervical screening guidelines are recommendations for Pap testing and women may require other preventive health screens independent of Pap testing.