

Questions and Answers about VIAC Screening to Prevent Cervical Cancer

What is VIAC?

VIAC is a medical test that detects possibly precancerous cells on the cervix. VIAC involves swabbing the cervix with a vinegar-like solution. If precancerous cells are present on the cervix, they turn white. Removing these abnormal cells prevents them from progressing to cervical cancer in later years.

What does a VIAC-positive test result mean?

A VIAC-positive result means abnormal cells were present on the cervix. These cells require treatment, which is determined by your health care provider. A positive VIAC does not mean you have cancer. (A VIAC negative result means the cervix looks normal and healthy and no treatment is needed.)

Will treatment after VIAC protect against cervical cancer for good?

When a VIAC-positive woman is treated, it will likely eliminate the problem for good. After treatment, there is a small chance that the problem could occur again in the future. It is highly recommended that you follow up with your health care provider.

Can a woman contract HIV from VIAC equipment?

No. VIAC equipment is sterilized after every use, and the equipment is used only once per woman.

Q: Can VIAC testing detect sexually transmitted diseases?

VIAC screening is designed to detect changes on the cervix that can lead to cancer, but VIAC screening includes a thorough examination of the vulva, vagina and cervix. This exam may diagnose other conditions, such as polyps, discharge, warts, and other problems.

Important Information about Women's Health



In collaboration with the
Family Child Healthcare Providers
at Karanda Mission Hospital
and
Better Healthcare for Africa, Inc.

Please note: This brochure is not intended to be a comprehensive reference of women's health issues. Information on HIV/AIDS and STIs can also be found elsewhere.

FAMILY PLANNING

Why is it important?

- It is a decision about when and how many children to have
- It is the right of a couple or the individual raising a family to make this decision
- Choosing not to have children eliminates the likelihood of delivering an HIV infected baby

What are your options for contraception?

- Short-acting methods
 - Oral contraceptives
 - Condoms
 - Injectables
- Long acting & reversible methods
 - Implants – Jadelle & Implanon
 - Intrauterine Contraceptive Device
- Permanent & non-reversible methods
 - *Strongly advised for older mothers with 4 children or more***
 - Female surgical contraception – tubal ligation
 - Male surgical contraception – vasectomy

Important: Always use a condom, to prevent sexually transmitted infections and HIV



HYPERTENSION (HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE)

Risk Factors:

- Family history, increased weight, poor diet, no exercise, smoking and drinking

How to control?

- Lifestyle
 - Diet – low fat, lots of fruits and vegetables, low salt
 - Exercise and stress reduction
 - Stop alcohol and smoking
 - Medications

What happens if you do not control high blood pressure?

- Heart attack, stroke, kidney disease, vision changes



CHRONIC DISEASES

Chronic diseases are diseases that affect people for a long time, such as asthma, and arthritis. Diabetes and hypertension are the most commonly encountered and life threatening chronic diseases.

DIABETES (HIGH BLOOD SUGAR)

Risk Factors:

Diabetes runs in the family, being overweight, poor diet, no exercise, smoking and drinking

Symptoms:

Weight loss, increased thirst, increased urination, and general body pains

How to control?

- Lifestyle:
 - Diet – low sugar, low fats, more fibre
 - Exercise
- Take medications when diet and exercise are not helping
- Insulin Injections
- Important to monitor sugar levels at home, if possible

What happens if you do not control diabetes?

There is a risk of stroke, heart attack, kidney disease, nerve damage, eye damage

Speak to your health practitioner to know the signs of low and high blood sugar levels.

CERVICAL CANCER

What is it?

- Cancer that occurs at the mouth of the womb
- It is caused by the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), which is usually sexually transmitted

How can you prevent it?

- Use condoms during sexual activity
- Through cervical screening to detect and treat early (pre-cancerous) signs of the disease.

What cervical screening methods are used?

Visual Inspection with Acetic Acid and Cervicography (VIAC) or Pap Test
Important: A positive VIAC exam does not mean you have cancer.

Who should be screened?

Any woman who is sexually active

How often should one be screened?

- Every 3 years if you are HIV negative
- Every year if you are HIV positive

Danger Signs:

- Foul smelling discharge
- Bleeding in excess of the normal amount during menstruation or post-menopausal bleeding
- Lower stomach pains





BREAST CANCER

What is it?

- It is a Tumor that occurs in the breast
- Not all breast tumors are cancerous, especially in younger and breast-feeding women

What are some of the risk factors?

- Age over 40
- Family history of breast cancer
- Smoking and drinking alcohol
- Diet high in animal fat and low in fibre

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Lump or thickening in or near the breast or in the underarm that lasts longer than one month
- Blood-stained or clear fluid from the nipple
- Change in feel or appearance of the skin on your breast or nipple

How can you prevent it?

Breast self evaluation

- Do this 3-5 days after a period when breasts are less likely to be tender and swollen
- In front of the mirror, inspect and feel both breasts. Your husband or partner can assist you.
- Early detection of abnormalities will allow a better chance for effective treatment

MENOPAUSE

What is it?

- It is a natural part of the aging process in women that begins around the age of 50
- It is not an illness
- It marks the end of woman's reproductive years and her ability to have children
- It is a time of hormonal changes in the body
- Menopause should not interfere with sexual activity

How will you know you have reached menopause?

- Menstrual flow will become irregular, usually between age 40 to 50

What are the symptoms of menopause?

- Weight gain
- Hot flashes and night sweats
- Vaginal dryness, less bladder control
- Mood swings, irritability, general body pains
- Bone pain and dry skin

Important: *If you are experiencing any of the above symptoms, consult your health practitioner to rule out other medical illnesses.*

How can you improve your wellness during menopause?

- Follow a well-balanced diet, be physically active, reduce stress in your life
- Hot flashes: drink fluids, limit tea and caffeinated drinks
- If you have bladder symptoms, see your health practitioner to rule out infection
- Vaginal dryness: use local estrogen cream and continue to be sexually active
- Drink enough milk products for bone health

