



This is an important update to inform health care professionals about the interim arrangements for the National Cervical Screening Program.

The renewed National Cervical Screening Program will take effect on 1 December 2017

The renewed National Cervical Screening Program will be implemented on 1 December 2017, supported by the National Cancer Screening Register.

Until the renewed National Cervical Screening Program is implemented, our existing world-class cervical screening program will continue as per the current screening pathway for eligible women. It is important that women due for their two yearly cervical screening continue to be tested using a cytology based cervical screening test such as the Pap test.

On 23 February 2017, the Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer Professor Brendan Murphy announced the change in [this statement](#).

We understand that some health care professionals and women may have chosen to align cervical screening with the start of the new Cervical Screening Test (primary HPV test) and, understandably, are disappointed by this unexpected delay. This has led to a number of enquiries about this interim period. Please use the information provided below to guide both your practice and your conversations with women.

Cervical screening until the renewed National Cervical Screening Program is introduced on 1 December 2017

- Until 1 December, all women aged between 18 and 69 who have ever been sexually active should continue to have a Pap test every two years.
- Health care professionals need to encourage women to continue screening as health care professionals play an important role in maintaining women's participation in cervical

screening. Some states and territories are reporting small reductions in the number of women having their two yearly Pap test since the beginning of 2017.

- If a woman visits for a Pap test prior to 1 December 2017 and is under 25 years of age, a Pap test should be performed as usual.
- State and territory registers will continue to send reminder letters to eligible women as per the current process. Health care professionals are also encouraged to continue to send reminder letters to their patients as per their current process.
- The delay has created some additional pressures on pathology providers, so turnaround times for results may be lengthened. However, this is still clinically safe for women.

Medical Benefits Schedule (MBS) arrangements

1 May – 30 November 2017

- The current MBS item for the conventional cytology test will remain, however the fee will increase to \$28.00 (up from \$19.45).
- To support the pathology sector, a new Liquid Based Cytology (LBC) MBS item will be added which will only be available until 30 November 2017.
- For each patient, a Medicare rebate will only be payable for one type of cytology based cervical screening test, whether the LBC test or a conventional cytology test.
- The LBC test is no more effective than the conventional cytology test.
- All health care professionals should follow the advice of their pathology provider as to whether to prepare conventional cytology slides or LBC slides.

From 1 December 2017

- New MBS items will be added to the schedule to support the renewed National Cervical Screening Program. The Commonwealth Department of Health will inform health care professionals about these changes closer to the time.

New Clinical Management Guidelines

- Until 30 November 2017, health care professionals should continue to be guided by the clinical management pathway as outlined in the [2005 Screening to Prevent Cervical Cancer: Guidelines for the Management of Asymptomatic Women with Screen Detected Abnormalities](#).
- You may have heard that the clinical management guidelines for the renewed cervical screening pathway have been released. The new guidelines are available for training and

reference purposes only, and will not guide clinical practice until 1 December 2017. These are available at www.cancer.org.au

- More information about these guidelines will be available when new online education and training modules developed by the Department of Health are released later in 2017. These online training modules will help you understand and implement the 2016 Guidelines.

State and territory registers

- The current state and territory registers will continue to support the National Cervical Screening Program by sending cervical reminder and follow up communication to eligible women. Medical practices are encouraged to continue issuing Pap test reminders and recalls to women as per their established procedures.

Frequently Asked Questions for health care professionals

The Commonwealth Department of Health has developed [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#) for health care professionals based on current interim arrangements. These [FAQs](#) will be updated regularly from now until 1 December 2017, so for up to date information please visit the Department's website.

For more information about the renewed National Cervical Screening Program

Nationally consistent online training and resources for both health care professionals and consumers will be available closer to the implementation of the renewed National Cervical Screening Program.

For more information on the National Cervical Screening Program and the National Cancer Screening Register please go to www.cancerscreening.gov.au

