

Fact sheet issued October 2011

Women with an intellectual disability are less likely to be screened for cervical cancer

According to the Victorian population health survey of people with an intellectual disability (VPHS-ID 2009), only 14.8 per cent of women with an intellectual disability aged 20–69 years were reported to have had a Pap test in the past two years compared to 71.1 per cent of women in the general Victorian population.

Early detection of cervical cancer is important

Regular Pap tests lead to early detection of cervical cancer improving the chances of successful treatment.

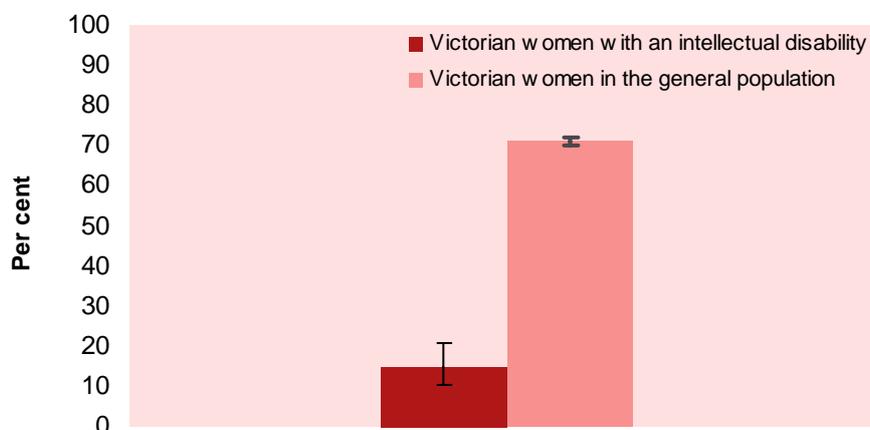
All women who have ever been sexually active should have a Pap test

All women who have ever been sexually active should have a Pap test. Some women with an intellectual disability may be unable to communicate about their sexual history. In some cases, particularly when multiple carers are involved over a long period of time, the woman's sexual history may be unknown. The benefits of screening need to be balanced against the risk of an invasive procedure.

Pap tests are required every two years for women aged 18–69 years

The National Cervical Screening Program recommends screening should begin between the ages of 18–20 years, or one or two years after the first sexual intercourse, whichever is later; and ends at age 69 years for women who have had two normal Pap tests within the last five years. The policy recommends that women over 70 years who have never had a Pap test, or who request a Pap test, should be screened. Pap tests are recommended for all women in the target population, every two years, including those who have been vaccinated against several types of human papilloma virus (HPV).

Figure: Cervical cancer screening and Victorian women



For further information

The VPHS-ID 2009 is a statewide survey the Department of Health undertook to collect information on the health and wellbeing of people with an intellectual disability in Victoria. This is the first time the survey has been carried out in Victoria.

The full report of the VPHS-ID 2009 is available at:
<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/healthstatus/>

To search online for local Pap test providers with information about disability access and choice of gender of practitioner go to Pap Screen Victoria at <http://www.papscreen.org.au>

The Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria (CDDHV) and PapScreen Victoria have developed a PapScreen booklet - an easy read booklet for women with intellectual disabilities which is available from the CDDHV website under products and resources at: <http://www.cddh.monash.org>

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