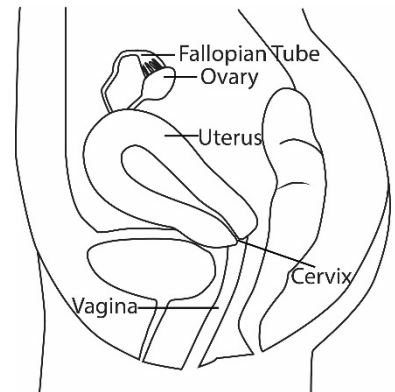


Having Your First Pelvic Exam

What is a pelvic exam?

A pelvic exam is when reproductive organs are examined by a healthcare provider. During a pelvic exam you might be checked for:

- the health, shape and position of the reproductive organs
- sores and lumps on the genitals
- sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- infections in the vagina (e.g., yeast or bacterial vaginosis)
- cervical cancer screen (i.e., Pap test)



When should I have a pelvic exam?

It's important to consider having an exam for concerns such as:

- itching
- abnormal bleeding
- pain with sex
- unusual lumps, bumps, sores or rashes that can be seen or felt
- abdominal pain or bloating and difficulty eating
- uterus dropping into the vagina
- vaginal discharge that is unusual for you
- bladder leaking
- trouble getting pregnant (infertility)
- pelvic pain
- rectal bleeding

What happens during a pelvic exam?

It takes about five minutes. You might feel pressure, but it shouldn't hurt.

1. You will get undressed from the waist down (underwear off). You'll get a sheet to cover yourself.
2. The exam may include a visual check, speculum (a tool used to help see the vagina and cervix) exam, or fingers gently inserted into the vagina.
3. Samples of cervical cells (Pap test) or vaginal fluid (STI test) might be taken.
4. Your healthcare provider might feel the shape and position of the reproductive organs.

You might have some light vaginal bleeding (spotting) after.

How do I get a pelvic exam?

See your healthcare provider. You might need to make an appointment. Write down any questions you have including when you need to return. Bring them to the appointment.

Tell your healthcare provider:

- when your last period started
- if you are pregnant or think you might be
- if you take any medicine (e.g., birth control)
- when your last Pap test was
- if you want STI testing (it might not be done unless you ask)
- about any concerns (e.g., changes in vaginal discharge, bleeding between periods, pain during or after sex)

Did You Know?

- You have the right to make the decision to have sex or not.
- You can plan ahead and talk to your partner(s) about how to lower your risk of pregnancy, STIs, and HIV.
- You can consider getting regular testing for STIs and HIV. Talk to your health care provider.
- Many clinics offer low or no cost birth control.

To find a clinic near you visit ahs.ca/srh

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information, call Health Link at **811**.

Websites

- ahs.ca/srh
- ReadyOrNotAlberta.ca
- teachingsexualhealth.ca
- myhealth.alberta.ca
- sexandu.ca

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