



National Cervical Screening Program Update

Build your knowledge and skills to offer the cervical screening self-collection option to eligible patients by checking out the updated [National Cervical Screening Program education course](#).

Overview

- The [National Cervical Screening Program education course](#) has recently been updated to reflect the expansion of self-collection eligibility on 1 July 2022.
- From 1 July 2022, women and people with a cervix aged 25-74 have had the choice to screen either through self-collection of a vaginal sample using a swab (unless a co-test is indicated), or clinician-collection of a sample from the cervix using a speculum.
- Healthcare providers play a critical role in the National Cervical Screening Program (NCSP) and are best placed to talk with their eligible patients about cervical screening testing options, including which collection method is most appropriate for each person and their personal circumstances.
- Key updates to the course are designed to help healthcare providers develop the knowledge and skills to offer self-collection to eligible patients and increase cervical screening participation rates, especially in under-screened patient groups.
- The online training modules, together with a range of other available educational resources for healthcare providers (see below), are valuable tools in promoting cervical screening among patients and communities.

Course content

- The course is a self-directed CPD online training course consisting of six modules, intended to enhance, reinforce and increase knowledge about the Cervical Screening Test and clinical pathways.
 - The duration of each module is approximately 1hr, with 1 self-directed CPD point able to be allocated per hour spent completing the modules.
- The course provides practice points on how to apply the [NCSP Guidelines for the management of screen-detected abnormalities, screening in specific populations and investigation of abnormal vaginal bleeding](#) and resources to help healthcare providers engage under-screened patients.
- Information on self-collection as a screening option can be found throughout all modules, but of particular interest may be *Module 4 Screening in Practice* which describes the steps involved in supporting a patient to self-collect a vaginal Cervical Screening Test sample.

Other educational resources

In addition to the comprehensive national online education modules outlined above, there are a number of complementary educational resources available to help healthcare providers develop the knowledge and skills to offer self-collection to patients. These include:

- Specific healthcare provider resources such as:
 - NCSP [Healthcare provider toolkit](#) – an online toolkit to help healthcare providers engage and support under and never-screened patients in cervical screening.
 - [Understanding the NCSP Pathway](#) – learn about the clinical pathway that supports the NCSP and the guidelines for pathology testing of cervical and vaginal samples.
 - [Quick Reference Guide - Self-collected vaginal sample](#) – a quick reference guide about the option of self-collection for cervical screening, including possible test results and follow-up requirements.
 - [Quick Reference Guide - Clinician-collected Cervical Screening Tests](#) – a quick reference guide about the option of clinician-collection for cervical screening, including information on possible test results and follow-up requirements.
 - [NCSP Guide to understanding cervical screening test results](#) – a brochure explaining what the Cervical Screening Test is, what the possible test results mean and what happens when a patient is referred to a specialist.
- The full range of national resources for both healthcare providers and participants can be found at www.health.gov.au/ncsp-resources.

Background

- A Cervical Screening Test using a self-collected vaginal sample is as accurate as a clinician-collected sample taken from the cervix during a speculum examination. A summary of the evidence of self-collection sensitivity can be found in the [National Cervical Screening Program Clinical Guidelines](#).
- Self-collection provides greater choice in screening options and is a key tool to increase participation in cervical screening and support better outcomes in under-screened groups.
- Self-collection removes some cultural and personal barriers that may discourage some people from screening – it provides a more acceptable option for many groups that are less likely to screen, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, culturally and linguistically diverse women, gender and sexually diverse people, people with disabilities, women who have experienced sexual violence and those with a previous negative cervical screening experience.
- A [pilot study](#) demonstrated that 85.7% of never screened or under-screened participants who declined a speculum examination agreed to HPV self-collection when the test was offered to them in a sensitive and culturally appropriate manner and with appropriate follow-up advice (Saville M, et al. *Self-collection for under-screened women in a National Cervical Screening Program: pilot study. Current Oncology* 2018).

The NCSP is continuing to see a promising level of self-collection uptake amongst participants since eligibility was expanded – with more than 16% of eligible screeners now choosing self-collection as their preferred screening option.

Reminder – self-collection provides an additional choice for patients in how their Cervical Screening Test sample is collected. Patients must be due for cervical screening to receive a Medicare subsidised Cervical Screening Test, including through self-collection. Note: self-collection is not appropriate for patients that require a co-test, for example because they are symptomatic.

Want to know more?

Find more information and resources about the National Cervical Screening Program and self-collection at www.health.gov.au/NCSP.