



A Patient's Guide  
To Women's Health

# *Pelvic Exam or Pap Test*

To locate a family planning  
Clinic near you, please visit:  
[http://doh.sd.gov/FamilyHealth  
/FamilyPlanning.aspx](http://doh.sd.gov/FamilyHealth/FamilyPlanning.aspx)  
Or Call 1-800-738-2301

State (SDCL 20-13) and Federal (Title VI of Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended, and the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990) laws require that the S.D. Family Planning Program provide services to all persons without regard to race, color, creed, religion, sex, disability, ancestry, or national origin.

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No one is denied service  
due to inability to pay.



# *What's the Difference?*

## Pelvic Exam

A pelvic exam is a “check-up” of your vagina (inside and outside), cervix (opening of the uterus), uterus, and ovaries.

### Why is a pelvic exam important?

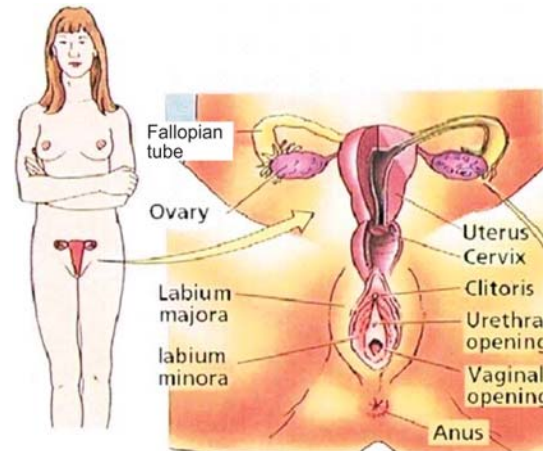
A pelvic exam may be performed to check for infection, irritation, and anything abnormal, including sexually transmitted infections.

### When do I need a pelvic exam?

Women get their first pelvic exam for a variety of reasons. Some get their exam once they start having sex or when they start a birth control method. Your healthcare provider will help you decide when it is right for you.

### How often do I need a pelvic exam?

It is recommended you have a pelvic exam every year beginning at age 21, regardless of your sexual preference or activity.



### We respect your privacy.

All services are confidential at South Dakota's family planning clinics, regardless of your age or marital status.



## Pap Test

A Pap test (also known as a “Pap smear”) is the gentle wiping or scraping of the cells of the cervix. A Pap test may be done at the same time as your pelvic exam.

### Why is a Pap test important?

A Pap test screens for abnormal or changing cells on the cervix that may or may not need treatment. Many factors may cause an abnormal Pap test. It does not always mean that you have cancer or an infection, such as HPV.

### When do I need a Pap test?

Your healthcare provider will help you decide when it is right for you to have your first Pap test. It is recommended you should have your first Pap test at age 21 regardless of your sexual preference or activity.

### How often do I need a Pap test?

It is recommended women between 21 and 30 should have a Pap test every two years. Women over the age of 30 may be screened less often based on previous Pap test results. Ask your healthcare provider if a Pap test is needed at the time of your yearly exam.