

**“At Your Cervix”**  
*Sarah-Dash Arbuckle BA (Hon), ND, CH*

It is often uncomfortable for people to hear it and to talk about it. Some women cringe when I offer them a mirror during their annual pap test. How can the base (root chakra) of our being exist in a state of health and harmony when we are too disgusted or embarrassed to acknowledge and honor this integral body part? If you've been contending with odor, itching, burning, painful intercourse or discharge, perhaps it's time for your annual pap.

Prevention consists of daily lifestyle factors like diet, supplements, exercise, meditation, deep breathing, and faith. Screening and early diagnosis can help us potentially deal with diseases before diseases deal with us. As soon as you know your body's signals are amiss or disrupting your normal functioning, seek appropriate assistance from your community of health professionals. The earlier you address a health concern, the more likely your success if choosing more natural options.

Canadian Registered Naturopathic Doctors have 42 hours of classroom instruction in women's health concerns, 39 hours in Obstetrics, and 6 hours in a Gynecology lab with practical experience in performing pap tests.

A Pap test analyzes the cells of the cervix for dysplasia (abnormal cell changes) but does not test for the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) or its DNA typing. HPV has many types and some are more harmful than others. Types 6 and 11 cause 90% of vaginal warts and types 16 and 18 cause 70% of cervical cancers; *the 3<sup>rd</sup> most common form of cancer in women worldwide*. Many people are asymptomatic carriers and are unknowingly sharing it with their partners.

Warts usually surface when the immune system is compromised (aging, pregnancy, certain medications, or high sugar ingestion). Any genital contact can spread HPV, intercourse is not necessary, and condoms may not offer full protection. Some types of HPV cause no harm and for most people infected, the virus goes away on its own. About 2 out of every 3 people who have contact with genital warts will get it and 25% of cases come back within 3 months. When the virus does not go away it develops into precancerous lesions, genital warts, or cervical cancer depending on the type.

A Canadian woman has a **1 in 138 lifetime probability** of developing cervical cancer ([www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca)) and HPV infection is by far the most significant risk factor. **For women sexually active or in the reproductive age, think of regular physical exams, paps, blood work and breast exams as a form of health insurance.** The earlier you address a health concern, the more likely your success.

***Remember, earlier is better. As scary as a diagnosis can be, take charge and control of your health where and when you can. Schedule time everyday to care for yourself, cook good foods, drink clean water and make regular visits with health care providers to avoid disease and/or monitor your health. You are worth it. Feeling better is possible....***

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