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One test every five years could save your life

Gippsland Primary Health Network (PHN) is supporting general practices across the region to strengthen how they identify, record and follow up cervical screening, helping ensure women and people with a cervix do not fall through the cracks.

Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable cancers, but only if screening and follow-up happen. Gippsland PHN is working with general practices across the region to strengthen how screening information is recorded and shared, encouraging earlier follow-up and detection, safer care and improved outcomes for patients.

We're also partnering with 15 Gippsland-based practices on a quality improvement project to strengthen clinical coding and data recording for cervical screening. The three-month initiative includes workshops with practice staff, focused on building practical skills to design, implement and embed quality improvement activities within routine workflows.

More than 70% of Australians diagnosed with invasive cervical cancer have never taken part in cervical screening or are significantly overdue for their test.

Woman and people with a cervix aged 25 to 74 years of age, who have had any type of sexual contact, should have a Cervical Screening Test every five years.

The Cervical Screening Test replaced the pap test in 2017 and detects human papillomavirus (HPV), a common infection that causes almost all cervical cancers - before abnormalities appear. Detecting HPV early helps prevent cervical cancer from developing.

Screening is arranged through your healthcare provider, and people can choose the method that works best for them:

- **Self-collection:** A private, simple swab taken by the individual inside their vagina (no need to reach the cervix)
- **Clinician-collected:** A healthcare provider collects the sample using a speculum and a small brush from the cervix

Gippsland PHN Chief Executive Officer, Amanda Proposch, said Australia is on track to be one of the first countries in the world to eliminate cervical cancer, but increasing screening rates is critical for prevention, early detection and treatment.

“Regular screening is one of the most powerful tools we have to fight cervical cancer. We encourage anyone who is due or overdue for their test to speak with their GP and learn more about their options for screening in a way that feels right for them. We want everyone in our community to feel supported to screen in a way that is comfortable and culturally safe for them,” said Ms Proposch.

Women and people with a cervix can learn more about cervical screening by talking to their doctor or visiting health.gov.au/ncsp.

Healthcare providers can learn more about cervical screening options by visiting: acpcc.org.au/self-collection-campaign.

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Media contact

Natalie Kuczer

Communications Officer

Gippsland PHN

03 5175 5481

natalie.kuczer@gphn.org.au